





*Cullen House,
Library*

THE
HISTORY OF A FLIRT.

RELATED BY HERSELF.

“Disdain and Scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,
Misprizing what they look on ; and her wit
Values itself so highly, that to her
All matter else seems weak : she cannot love,
Nor take no shape nor project of affection,
She is so self-endear’d.”

SHAKSPEARE.

Second Edition.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1841.

HISTORY OF A FLIRT.

CHAPTER I.

LORD ELFORD became domesticated with us, and “ Miss Louisa Vansittart’s extraordinary good fortune” again brought me before the public to be commented upon, envied, or pitied, as fancy might direct. Lord Elford improved upon a more intimate acquaintance : the dignified nobleman softened into the agreeable and lively companion ; his countenance once so uninteresting to my eye, sparkled with heartfelt happiness, and the sturdy look, when it did occasionally appear, gave effective variety to his expression, besides possessing an uncontrollable power over my actions. I shrunk under those powerful eyebeams, which I fancied read my inmost thoughts, and detected the hollowness of my assurances. But my lover believed me free from every

stain of wrong, however deeply he deprecated a silence on my part upon the subject of the past. His life was laid open to my view ; his feelings were all explained to my slightest inquiry, but mine were yet a mystery to him. I had evaded many questions by playful remarks, and turned aside disagreeable, intruding fears by a smile or an endearment, but Lord Elford was in profound ignorance of the events of my life, since my entrance into the gaieties of Bath ; and though he might never discover my sins in commission before our marriage, they might and must transpire some future day. Luckily it would be too late to affect Miss Vansittart, and Lady Elford must argue the facts as she could best arrange them. I only feared two disclosures—my affair with Mr. Ellis, and the nature of my intimacy with Lady Anne O'Brien—either subject would wound the peculiar delicacy of his notions of female propriety, and I was sure Lord Elford's mind would reject me even at the altar, if he believed me unworthy the high opinion I held in his esteem, my anxiety was to guard that esteem and secure my position in his affections unshaken.

Captain Thelwal remained stationary at the Hermitage. He had not the power to withdraw himself from my influence, and though my publicly-acknowledged engagement to Lord Elford closed every hope, he still lingered, and still met me at every party, public and private. His manners were now losing

their offensive tone, and becoming infinitely dangerous to my heart. There was an expression of deep, hopeless anxiety in his lustrous eyes which affected me ; a gentle sorrowing manner which subdued me. In spite of my prospects, so brilliantly inviting, in spite of my lover's amiable and devoted attentions, my spirit turned towards the man I had loved—whom I feared I still loved—and our eyes often encountered each other's expression ; I read despair in his—he must have found forgiveness in mine. My vanity was strangely gratified in perceiving I had made wretched the man who had caused me so many agonized moments. If he had loved Mrs. Fortescue I was well avenged in the hopelessness of his present attachment to myself. It was impossible to feign that listless manner and heavy eye. The mournful tone of voice told too plainly a heart disquieted, and the dejected, absent spirit proved there was misery within. I was happy in my revenge, but my bosom throbbed with contending feelings. Though I leaned on Lord Elford's arm, my eye would turn instinctively to Thelwal, and when I listened to Lord Elford's gentle complimentary remarks in public, my ear was straining to catch tones which went instantly to my heart, from another quarter of the apartment.

We were much more in society since Lady Langham's marriage. The Hermitage was a general point of reunion, and Lady Langham's carriage

gave us facilities we had not commanded previous to her union with Sir James. My engagement gave rise to much gaiety also ; it was an excuse for many parties which enlivened our very quiet neighbourhood. The Clifdens and Walkers, the Mortons and Desboroughs, who sat for years in their quiet drawing-rooms, giving annual stupid dinners, now came forth and threw open their doors to the little world. There was a general commotion brought on by the agreeable and popular manners of Sir James Langham, who loved the sight of happy beings, and became the leader of gaiety.

After the fashion of the Hermitage, the families around invited people to stay in their houses, and our church became the emporium of novelties. Gay faces and gay people appeared in the sombre baized pews of our very quiet neighbours ; the village grew lively with carriages driving through its retired street, and there was bustle and display throughout the parish. Captain Bates and his daughter alone stood the shock. They accepted invitations as matters of course, but they sat together behind doors and in retired corners in silence ; their minds could not enter into the vivacity of the scene. Captain Bates sorrowed over certain recollections connected with Mrs. Fortescue, and Miss Bates no longer heard the everlasting tongue of Major Sandford prattling at her ear. Every one had their private sorrows, but no one displayed

them so openly as the Bateses. I had mine ; but experience was teaching me caution rapidly. I conversed and chatted with smiles upon my lips, but wretched forebodings at my heart ; I was struggling to look unconcerned, while the sighs which burst from Captain Thelwal penetrated and disturbed my serenity. I could not avoid hearing them—I could not avoid meeting the protracted and sorrowing gaze—I could not but feel pained for sufferings which I caused in the soul of him for whom I felt admiration and love, and whose uncertain manners had long interested and piqued me.

Among the gaily chatting groups I often sought amusement to drown reflection, or joined the dancers to lose sight of powerful attraction in the figure which constantly met my eye. I rarely left Lord Elford's side, or danced with any other partner, yet did that melancholy form pursue me through the evening, and when I returned home, it fastened itself on my imagination during hours of sleepless meditation : once I had been near him in the quadrille, and he had held my hand in the figure : how it trembled with agitation !—once, too, he had dared to press that hand, and I had not courage, I had not ability to resent the liberty, or even withdraw my hand from the pressure !

At the Clifdens' dinner party which concluded

with a dance, as all parties were now to include a quadrille, I stood up with Thelwal. Lord Elford had insisted upon my dancing, though I was averse from the very beginning to stand up : I did not feel well. He was proud of my figure and style of dancing, and loved to see me exhibit. This evening he fancied me depressed, and after dancing together once, he entreated me again to join the dancing party.

“ I love to see you dance,” was his remark, “ I love to see your graceful figure gliding through the quadrille, like a being from another sphere, instead of jumping and growing heated like the generality of English dancers. I wish you would oblige me by dancing, Louisa.”

“ I am not equal to dancing this evening, Edmund.”

“ Oblige Lord Elford in his wish,” said Captain Thelwal, who stood near us, and now came listlessly forward. “ Oblige my lord, and honour me with your hand for this set. You cannot decline giving *him* pleasure.”

Captain Thelwal presented his arm in silent respectfulness, and I had placed mine within it before I was aware of the action. Lord Elford smiled.

“ I shall enjoy this quadrille, Louisa, stand somewhere near me that I may see you distinctly.”

HISTORY OF A FLIRT.

We moved towards the dancers, but Captain Thelwal contrived we should not front his lordship : I was myself passive.

There was no time for conversation during the quadrille ; we moved on, turned round, and chassé'd in silence like the rest ; but when the music ceased and the dance was done, Captain Thelwal spoke.

“ Must I give you back *immediately*, or may we do as others do for a few minutes ?”

“ Certainly as others do,” I replied, with a slight hesitation.

“ Then let us walk a little after the warm dancing.” Captain Thelwal drew my hand slowly within his arm, and we retired into the room dedicated to repose and refreshment. This was wrong on my part, for it encouraged Captain Thelwal to persist in attentions which were improper, considering my situation.

“ You are fatigued I fear,” said my partner, fixing a long melancholy look upon me.

“ Not so weary as I expected, but I will gladly take a seat.”

“ You are not then so weary of me as you were once cruel enough to declare ?”

“ Nonsense, Captain Thelwal.”

“ To you it must be so ; not simply nonsense, but sport : to me, however, it is not so amusing. I

wish I could forget many expressions and painful feelings that recur when I would fain be happy."

I was silent, but my eye fell under his gaze.

"I may now congratulate you upon an event which is no longer a secret, which has long been none to me, but I could not enter upon the subject without too much bitterness. I think now I have tutored my feelings and disciplined my heart to bear the terrible sentence with outward composure at least, and I can wish the happiness you are enjoying may last for ever. I wish it from my soul."

"You wish me happy from your soul after all you have said and done !" burst from me with angry impetuosity.

"I wish you the happiness I can never enjoy myself," said Thelwal, mournfully ; "but I am certain you are fatigued, and I shall be more easy if you will rest."

Instead of returning to my party, I found myself seated on a sofa beside Captain Thelwal, listening to his further remarks.

"It may be a jest to a happy admired woman, when her engagement to one man gives misery to many ; but her heart should be tender of ridiculing their suffering."

"I cannot tell to whom you allude, Captain Thelwal, or of whom you speak. I know no happy

woman or miserable man, therefore I am ignorant of your meaning."

"Do you know *no* miserable man?—have you no idea of any one pining for that which he must not ask for, or lingering in pains which he dares not confess?"

My heart palpitated violently; I would have risen to depart, but leaden weights seemed attached to my limbs, and I could not move. My lips parted, but no sound was emitted: Thelwal saw my distress.

"I do not address my remark at *you*, Miss Vansittart: I see your heart is too gentle to pain me, now that all hope is ended. I will pray for your happiness with the man you can and do love."

"Do so," I cried faintly, "for I need every one's prayers."

"You need a prayer!" exclaimed Thelwal, energetically; "you need a prayer, when every blessing is at your feet! when everything the world has to bestow is yours! No, I am the wretched thing to pray for! hopes blasted—poor and uncared for, I am the object for your prayers and kind consideration!"

"Your own conduct caused your misery, Captain Thelwal," I replied, with strong emotion.

"Mine?—yes, I know it. I loved a creature far removed from my destiny, and worshipped her at a fearful distance, because she was too bright to shine upon me alone."

“ I hate such nonsensical folly, Captain Thelwal,” and my old impetuosity again burst forth. “ I hate such nonsense when a human being is not so far removed but she may be sought in this world. Had you spoken in time, and as you ought to have done, all this might have been spared us. I should not be—” a slight pressure against my arm roused me, what did Captain Thelwal mean by this liberty ?

“ Nay do not be angry,” said my companion in a hurried whisper, “ look towards the door.”

I started, and turned in that direction : Lord Elford was closely observing us.

“ Dance with me to-morrow at the Mortons, I have something to say of importance,” continued Thelwal in the same agitated manner, “ will you engage yourself to me ?”

“ Yes, yes, but don’t speak to me now.”

And we each kept our seat, apparently unconcerned and indifferent to each other. Lord Elford gradually made his way towards me ; but I thought there was something altered in his manner, and something changed in his look as he addressed me.

“ You are improved by a little effort, Louisa, and dancing has done you good.”

Captain Thelwal rose, and bowing to me, relinquished his seat to Lord Elford, and retired among the dancers. My eye followed him ; I saw him take his station at some distance, but where our

movements could be overlooked, and I observed him watching us attentively.

Lord Elford spoke again ere I attended to him.

“Louisa, your dislike to Captain Thelwal is considerably lessened ! your countenance was lighted up most brilliantly as you addressed him.”

“I dare say it was : we were talking of old times.”

“*Very* old times ?”

“I don’t know that I can say exactly that, but all time past is considered old : you will soon tell people *we* are old friends.”

“I hope so ; but did not your acquaintance with Captain Thelwal commence a few months since at Ryde ?”

“I did become introduced to him there, but why ?”

“When Mr. Turner Ellis and yourself were overturned.”

I nearly screamed with surprise. “How did you know I was overturned, Edmund ?” I dared not meet his eye.

“I heard a lady with Mrs. Clifden mention the circumstance, and the name ! Who is Mr. Turner Ellis, Louisa ?”

I had courage to glance at Lord Elford’s face ; it was composed and free from suspicion : I breathed freely again.

“Mr. Turner Ellis was that little old man you

wot of," I replied, laughing, "whom I could not fancy."

"But whose remembrance overpowered you at Tewkesbury?"

"Now and then he certainly appears before me, but I never could dwell upon that kind of things. Who is the lady?"

"I do not know; she was talking to Lady Langham, and recalling some circumstance to her memory when I came to look for you. What were you so earnestly discussing with your partner?"

"Oh, different little affairs of past time."

"You never tell me anything of the past, Louisa; I have heard of your overturn from a stranger, and of Mr. Turner Ellis, through the medium of the organ at Tewkesbury, but all else is a blank. I must return to the Ryde lady for information."

"Let us both go; I should like to see this lady."

We accordingly returned to the dancing-room, and I saw Lady Langham conversing with a young lady whose face was certainly familiar to me, though I could not tax my memory where we had before met. I was introduced to her by Lady Langham, —Miss Jones. I had met dozens of young ladies by that title: it did not enlighten me. At last the lady herself proclaimed her knowledge of my movements.

"I was staying with Mrs. Ray when Mr. Ray attended poor Mr. Turner Ellis at Ryde, and my

chief amusement was watching Mr. Ellis and yourself take your daily airing. I was also on the pier with Mr. Ray when you and Captain Thelwal walked up and down so long, but perhaps you do not remember my face."

I involuntarily uttered an exclamation of surprise, and snatched my hand from Lord Elford's supporting arm, but replaced it instantly.

"What is the matter, my love?" said his lordship tenderly.

"Nothing—a sort of twitch—I have a twitch now occasionally."

"You may, perhaps, recal me to your mind at Bath, Miss Vansittart;" continued Miss Jones. "I remember supplicating you to get me into Lady Anne O'Brien's parties, for I was dying to become one of the Marlborough House inmates, but I was taken into the country before you could effect my entrance, though you were all and everything to Lady Anne. Do you remember, Miss Vansittart, how stylishly she did everything?—Where is your friend now?"

The woman was ruining me in every word she uttered: I stood petrified. Lady Langham relieved me by answering for me—that Lady Anne had left England.

"Ah, she is on the continent; then you really forget me, Miss Vansittart?"

"I cannot at this moment, Miss Jones, really

bring to mind a countenance which is yet familiar to my eye."

"I dare say not, you and Lady Anne were so occupied in gaiety you know; but we little people do not forget the fixed stars of a public place. You were only objects for our wonder, and we could not hope to be noticed in return.

The moon looks down on many brooks,
The brooks can see no moon but one.

Sir William De Burgh was your attendant then, and there were such bets about you!"

I felt Lord Elford's arm tremble. I trembled myself with alarm and horror. That woman was born to be my evil spirit, and I had not the power to bid her depart. My eyes fixed themselves upon her face, as if they were riveted by a spell. I saw no one else, I knew not how Lord Elford bore the infliction of Miss Jones's speech: I only felt his arm tremble. Miss Jones was not aware of her reiterated blows upon my heart.

"You will not be easily forgotten at Bath, I assure you: what a gay season it was! I wonder you bore it so well—always at some gaiety with Lady Anne. I was sure you did not remember me on the pier at Ryde. Captain Thelwal is here too, I understand."

I bowed. I could not utter. Sir James Lang-

ham came up to us. "What are you group of ladies talking about?"

"Oh, we are talking of Bath and Bath people so pleasantly, Sir James," answered Miss Jones.

I cared not what any one said: the worst was done, and Lord Elford had heard that which would subject me to a scrutiny I could ill endure, and could not satisfy. What I would have given for a conscience void of offence, to have met his questionings and searching looks in unappalled innocence! Sooner or later, actions will transpire, and secrecy only adds fuel to the fire—what would I not have given to have made an ingenuous confession to Lord Elford early in our engagement, and saved myself the miserable scene which must follow.

Lord Elford, to my suspicion, preserved his equanimity, and did not question me on the subjects so elaborately commented upon by Miss Jones; for a short time he was silent and very grave, but the gravity dissipated by degrees, and by some enchantment, it appeared to have passed from his mind, and he was restored to his own happy unconcern of spirits and manner.

I danced no more that evening. I had sustained a shock from which I should not easily recover my composure, and the conversation of Thelwal pressed heavily upon me. I was surrounded with springes, and hardly dared to reflect upon the volcanic ground on which I trod. Miss

Jones was led to the quadrilles by Sir James Langham, and I sought refuge between my mother and Mary, who had again quitted her husband for a few hours: the doctor was not positively ill, but he was not at all equal to meet the fatigue of warm rooms and dinner parties. Mary said, his feet was tolerably easy, but the workmen vexed him sadly and disturbed his mind. Gideon would be quite well if his mind was only at rest, but she fancied the Grange never brought rest, for something was always going wrong. It was a positive pleasure to me to hear Mary's remarks, though they began and terminated in her husband's health: in some measure my own thoughts were called off a harassing subject, and I could appear occupied to the eyes of Lord Elford and Captain Thelwal, who were talking near me. What a miserable resource!

I was glad to steal away to my room when we arrived at a very late hour home. I did not remain to chat with my mother and Lord Elford according to my usual custom, I had no spirits. I had much to consider and arrange in my mind, yet loneliness and meditation arranged nothing. I could only feel I had deceived Lord Elford in every possible way, and was on the verge of a discovery by some fatal unlooked-for means. Who on earth could have supposed a Miss Jones was ever to appear in our retired neighbourhood—who

had seen me in two faulty positions—always out with Lady Anne—and driving daily with Mr. Turner Ellis? Had I been in less guilty situations, Miss Jones's recollections might have formed a pleasing variety in my entertainment, but now her breath had been the fell Simoom: it had withered me.

And if Miss Jones had not appeared, what was I building up for future misery in receiving the renewed attentions of Captain Thelwal! I was allowing myself to be engaged by him, and listening to his specious flattery with pleased and devouring eagerness. Was this the conduct to produce happy results? I was madly in love with Thelwal. My outraged feelings, irritated by his apparent indifference to a conduct heartless as it was flagrant on my own part, became soothed by his humility, and gratified by his complaints: pique was dispelled by the absence of sarcasm, and my heart again attacked by gentle and insidious acts, gave back its affection with the whole impetuosity of my character. My love was exclusively Thelwal's, but my esteem and my promise were with Lord Elford. How truly did Captain Thelwal prophesy, "We shall not esteem each other, but we shall love on!"

It was useless to reflect; thinking never brought *me* comfort: and wearied with the yawning caverns which mentally opened on either side to my aching

sight, I fell asleep and dreamed of Miss Jones. I heard her talking of Bath and Lady Anne, loudly and pertinaciously : it seemed to my weary senses that she never drew breath or paused—on she talked in rapid flow, and she followed me as I flew from room to room talking faster and faster, till fright caused me to sink down before her. I woke ill, and with pains in my head and heart.

I could not swallow any breakfast : Lord Elford observed me with interest, and endeavoured to prevail upon me to take a cup of coffee. I turned from it with loathing. When my mother quitted the room, he took me kindly by the hand, but he was wont to encircle me in his arms : I did not deserve the continued mark of affection, but I keenly felt its omission, and I burst into a passion of tears.

“What makes you so exhausted and ill, Louisa?” asked my lover, in calmer tones than usual. He used to be all anxiety.

“That stupid Miss Jones has persecuted me all night,” I exclaimed, making an effort to regain composure. “Her voice has been in my ears like Fingal’s blast of the desert, and I am quite ill.”

“Why should reminiscences of the past always produce these attacks, Louisa?” said Lord Elford gravely.

“If her words had been spoken more gently,” I answered, evasively, “I should not have been over-

powered, but I cannot endure a thin sharp voice talking in one key ; it sets my teeth on edge."

"Have you any commands to Bath, Louisa, your first theatre of exhibition; I shall run down to-morrow for a few hours."

"You are going to Bath! Oh, don't go to that place!" I caught Lord Elford's hand, and held it tightly to my heart: I was hot and cold by turns, and I trembled perceptibly.

"I cannot endure the recurrence of these scenes," said my lord, as I grasped his hand. "I am aware some events have been concealed from my knowledge, which deeply concern my future peace, and I have a fearful anticipation that all is not to be happiness for me. Louisa, you have not treated me with openness. I will know about Mr. Turner Ellis, I will understand the nature of your intimacy with Lady Anne O'Brien; and, as you are silent, I will visit Bath, and remove this load from my heart. If you have known that woman long and intimately, my doom is fixed in this life, for I will never marry a pupil of hers." Lord Elford became very pale, and the determination of his character struggled with his strong feelings of attachment. I became half frantic, and threw myself on my knees before him.

"Oh, don't go to that fearful place, and I will tell you all, Edmund: I will tell you my faults, and you will pardon them. Would I had taken

my mother's advice, but I was so rooted in my own opinions—don't look so gravely at me, Edmund. Remember my youth and inexperience."

"I will, I do, Louisa;" and Lord Elford raised me and placed me in my chair. I could not still my tremblings. "I do remember your youth, and your beauty, and your assurances—now while I am equal to the task, tell me what is really the truth, and deceive me no more."

I began a confession of my acquaintance and subsequent intimacy with Lady Anne, but I withheld our mutual pursuit of Sir William de Burgh. I did not dare allude to our conversations at Marlborough House, neither did I name Talleyrand's secretary, the man Magrath. I passed on to Turner Ellis—I blamed myself for giving my society to one whom I did not love, but I drew a veil over his jealousy of Thelwal, and suppressed my actual engagement to him. My confession increased my crime, for it enlarged my duplicity, and confirmed the meanness of my soul, which could bend to deception to secure the worldly benefits of a match in which my heart had no concern.

Lord Elford listened with fixed attention to my garbled narrative: my fear of losing him flattered his weak point, for it assured him of my love; and my tears and youthful appearance won upon his regard and tender compassion, for he could

not believe I was old in artful systems. I saw his rigid muscles gradually relax their firmness: I felt his arm once more encircling my waist, and when I was again pressed to his heart, I required no words to assure me I was fully, perfectly forgiven!

All was again sunshine: Bath was forgotten, and not a word of lecture uttered. Lord Elford's pardon was free and full: he considered my own distress sufficient punishment for the error I had committed, and the subject was banished from our conversation. I could now take my coffee in happy certainty of being safe from Miss Jones's insinuations in the evening: her remarks were meant in all honour; she knew not the storm she had raised, but had not my "confession" taken place, to withdraw the sting from her Bath recollections, her sight would have been gall and wormwood. I had now only to contend with Captain Thelwal.

The simple plea of fatigue would release me from my attendance at the Mortons, and Lord Elford and myself might have passed a quiet evening at home, but I had not courage to renounce the pleasure of seeing Captain Thelwal. I had not energy to resist the curiosity that prompted me to hear what he had to say of so much importance:—to hear him speak to me and sit by me as in former days was too powerful an attraction to relinquish, but after this one evening's

enjoyment, I resolved to meet him no more, but dedicate myself to the man I was intending to marry, and whose dependence upon my principles demanded my gratitude and attention. I resolved to lead altogether a new life, and become a useful member of society : it was misery to be continually starting at shadows and dreading the rebukes of the wise and good : it was wretchedness to possess no approving feelings of right to uphold me among my fellow creatures ; to depend upon a breath for an exposée of half-hidden faults, and live in perpetual alarm of a total eclipse upon my fair fame ! Only this one evening at Lady Morton's—this last evening of enjoyment—just let me hear Thelwal's voice once more—let me see him once more in sorrow to soothe my perturbed spirit and gratify my vanity—this one last interview, and then !—

This morning of my confession was spent solely with Lord Elford. My mother paid her regular visit to the Grange, and those visits were now become necessary to Mary and her husband. Her presence cheered and relieved the solitude of their morning. It was impossible for Lady Langham to be much in her friend's society : though both lived in the same parish and worshipped in the same church, each was called to a very different ministry. Mary never quitted her husband, and the doctor loved seclusion. Lady Langham was rarely from the side of her attached companion, but his spirit

loved communion with its fellow-creatures, and he was always devising schemes of amusement. The friends, therefore, rarely met except at our luncheon-tray after morning service. My mother was constant, as the sun in his rising and setting, to her diurnal movements. Let the weather be ever so ungenial she went instinctively to the Grange after ordering dinner. If the heat proved intense, she crossed the fields in her cap and parasol—if the heavens poured down rain, she armed herself with an old hat and umbrella: nothing interrupted her course, and Mary would have now keenly felt any diminution of her society. The watchful eye of the daughter eagerly looked through the “cell” window as the clock striking eleven indicated the mother’s approach, and the deep tone of the “big dog” as Jenkins designated Neptune, was ever followed by the light footfall of Mary’s step advancing to greet her parent at the hall-door. Any check to this intercourse so established, would be painfully felt on either side.

I could not help asking Lord Elford why he appeared so unconcerned in manner during Miss Jones’s communication. “Now we are friends again, Edmund, tell me why you looked so cheerfully last night when I was low and miserable. I felt your arm tremble, but I never should have guessed you were annoyed, by your countenance.”

“My feelings,” replied Lord Elford, “are not

for public exhibition: if I suffer, my distress must not be the speculation of the multitude, or the sport of a few. While I appeared cheerfully conversing with your friend Captain Thelwal, Louisa, my mind was bracing itself to an arduous task. I meant this very day to visit Bath and ascertain through public report, if my fears and Miss Jones's observations were correct."

"Public report, Edmund! Would you have trusted public report in so material an affair?"

"I would: enough must transpire to ascertain whether you were or were not closely allied with Lady Anne. A woman of your lovely appearance must have created a great sensation if you allowed yourself to stand forward under *her* auspices. I should have heard enough to ascertain the respectable light in which my future wife was considered as a belle, and a woman of spotless reputation. I could not bear to hear your name passed round in ridicule, or commented upon with severity in a public place. My wife may have committed folly which is incidental to the ignorance and innocence of youth, but her name must not be mentioned in connexion with errors, and particularly in connexion with Lady Anne. Your ingenuous confession, however tardy, has relieved my apprehensions—am I now fully aware of *all*, Louisa? Is there nothing kept back that may disquiet me?"

"Nothing, nothing, Edmund—you know *all*!"

but my mouth felt parched as the falsity fell from my lips.

“I could not think Lady Langham’s friend, or Mrs. Vansittart’s daughter could act without principle,” continued Lord Elford, “and you are aware of the power of your own assurances: my soul covets them, and lives upon the idea of your purity and truth. When I am your husband, your beauty and vivacity will have a shield to protect you from the shafts of envy or malignity. When may I look for that hour, Louisa, and carry my treasure to Abbot’s Court?”

I was frightened at the very name of Abbot’s Court. It sounded to me the mausoleum of my hopes, the grave of all further intercourse with Thelwal—the prison-house of lively flirtation—my heart swelled.

Lord Elford again pleaded his affection—his anxiety—his longing desire to become a settled man.

“I will tell you to-morrow morning, Edmund—or speak to my mother, she will arrange everything, and I shall conform to her wishes. Marriage frightens me.”

“But why has it that effect upon you?” said his lordship, smiling at my unfeigned look of alarm.

“I fancy it four walls of enormous thickness, with a small iron grating to peep wistfully through at the free world.”

“ But are you not to enjoy your free will, my love ? Have I not promised you every indulgence at home and abroad ? ”

“ Ah ! Edmund, my female friend — where is she ? ”

“ Only that one restriction, Louisa, which does not extend to your present circle of friends. I admire them all.”

“ But a woman hates compulsion ! ”

“ I do not compel. I advise, and wish to avoid danger, by shunning the evil. Compulsion is force, — I compel nothing. In this case, I offer you an option, and there is no friend to dispute it. Hereafter it might be compulsion, but you know my invincible objection.”

“ Of course I must not object to *your* friends, male or female, I suppose ? ”

“ Yes, you may. I have no female friends, and few male friends, beyond Langham, whom I much respect. You may object to any whom I introduce to your notice. I will not introduce such men as Captain Thelwal, for instance, who I almost fancy likes reaching at forbidden fruit. I fancy him determined to play the agreeable to you, Louisa, in spite of your rejection, which, of course, means that it has not injured him, since you are engaged. I shall not obtrude Captain Thelwal at Abbot’s Court, since you dislike him, and I do not approve him.”

“Angels and ministers of grace defend us!” Abbot’s Court without Thelwal! I was unprepared for this stroke. I felt a tightening of the heart, a giddiness in my head which threw a mist over every object; my brain whirled, and my chair felt sliding from my weight. I sprung mechanically towards Lord Elford, and was caught by him before I fell.

“What can be the matter?” he exclaimed in surprise, as I gasped for breath and looked wildly at him. “My dear Louisa, what ails you?” His face expressed alarm and anxiety.

“I am so dreadfully giddy, Edmund. I can see nothing—everything is rolling round—hold me, I entreat.”

Lord Elford held me as fondly and as carefully as a mother would press her dying child to her bosom; and when the wretched whirl subsided, he laid me gently on the sofa, and watched over me with solicitude and tenderness. He could not comprehend my frequent attacks. There must be something very wrong to cause a giddiness and fall—more resembling a stroke of apoplexy than a common feeling of giddiness—and his first care after his marriage should be consulting upon the subject with Vance. Vance might set a broken limb, or discover disorganization in some affected part of the system, but his recipes could not reach a wilful,

unchastised heart. My attacks were not within the range of his powers.

I grew better under quiet and closed eyes. Lord Elford, satisfied the giddiness proceeded from an indifferent breakfast, and the excitement of my feelings under confession, ordered a mutton-chop to be prepared, and nothing could exceed the devoted attention and patience with which he tried to compose my restlessness, and attract my appetite to the little meal he placed before me. I contrived to eat a morsel to please his anxiety, but the glass of port wine he silently put to my lips was really beneficial. I tried to apologize for my weakness of body, but he would not allow me to speak.

“ I wish you to rest and be quiet, my love ; and I must put on the husband for once a little beforehand, and object to your going out this evening.”

I started up. “ Oh ! this evening I must go to Lady Morton’s—I must be there ! Mary and Lady Langham—I must go this evening, Edmund, for I am well again !”

“ Lady Langham and Mary will come to you here surely, dearest. The warm rooms will increase this giddiness, and I shall remain with you ; I will read to you.”

“ Not to-night, dearest Edmund. Let me go to-night, and I will return with you if I feel unequal

to the fatigue. I am sure Mary will be uncomfortable, and she has enough of discomfort. My mother would not leave me, and Mary would miss her so ! Oh, I must go to-night !”

Lord Elford hesitated, but my anxious manner won the victory : I had spoken of Mary, too—a plea irresistible : he loved me for thinking of Mary’s pleasure and Mary’s hopes, and sacrificing my own rest to her comfort ; he gave me credit for every high feeling and unselfish virtue, and while I lay cushioned on the sofa revolving my expected interview with Thelwal, Lord Elford was contemplating the wife of his choice, and endowing me with every good gift !

My mother returned in excellent spirits and very much heated, from the Grange. The Drinkwaters were both to dine at Leighton, and the doctor did not object to a drive of six miles to dine with a man as gouty as himself, though he had grumblings in his foot. Sir William Morton had been three years on crutches ; the doctor could walk alone, though trippingly and with a bent back. Sir William Morton and the doctor could chat eloquent matter upon their different medicines, and Sir William might pit his colchicum against the doctor’s bottle of “ what’s-his-name.” Sir William had the best temper ; but the doctor stood the firmest upon his legs. It would be an interesting evening to both gentlemen, and sympathy must unite Mary and her

ladyship in an imperishable bond of union. There would be no lack of topics interesting to each : they could vary their discourse most enviably, and while we were all condemned to the only two subjects which decorate country drawing-room conversations—fashions and servants' abilities—they could fly to the medicine-chest, the sick-room, and their modes of treatment, for ornamental and agreeable food for mental repast. It appeared to me that matrimony narrowed one's resources in society : a young woman could go afar off for variety in her chat among her little coterie—she could combine her subjects like her colours, to become the moment. She might speak of arts and sciences as well as of beaux ; of books and work, as of partners and conquests : but matrons never trespass beyond the decencies of their household. They carry each other in spirit through the nursery and round the kitchen with decorum and gravity, but that walk despatched, they sit in silence till the gentlemen enter and relieve their dulness, by discourse upon local subjects, and still duller records of the parish. Society is indisputably wretched work in the country, but it is balanced by great advantages. If there is no sprightliness, there is little vice. It is a dreamy stillness of existence, a dormouse aristocracy, where the machinery works silently, and every image falls mechanically into place. Mrs. Jones glides softly behind the K.C.B.'s lady, and Mrs. Smith politely

gives place to Mrs. Davis. There is neither life nor spirit among their numbers; but life passes easily on, and they wonder and pity at your fastidious delicacy.

Every member had arrived at Leighton, when our trio were ushered into the drawing-room. I had not gone to dress till it was almost six o'clock—the Mortons' dinner hour—and even then I retired against Lord Elford's better judgment: he considered me too unwell to move from home, but I could not be prevailed upon to remain a prisoner: go I must, for my soul was bent upon seeing Thelwal for the last time; and though I indolently reclined upon the sofa till the last possible moment of time, I was in renewed spirits and strength when we entered the carriage and drove rapidly to our destination. There was a very large party assembled, and Sir William Morton, upon crutches, was doing the honours most goodhumouredly, following his lively fat lady round the large circle, and joking upon his situation. He broke away from Doctor Drinkwater to attend to us.

“How do you do, Madame Vansittart? How do you do, Miss Vansittart? Glad to see you, my lord: I could once upon a time have crossed a room with any man, but you see time lays a wallet at my back,” and Sir William came smiling up like the *diable boiteux*.

Our compliments were soon exchanged, and my

eye wandered down the line of silently-arranged company. I saw the whole neighbourhood in array before me—my eye caught the Langhams nearly opposite ; they were talking to Mrs. Clifden. Where was Thelwal ? I saw him not. Sir James came up. “ How late you are ! We have been eating our gloves this half-hour.”

“ I do not see you all,” I cried, hastily, as I shook his hand.

“ Yes you do, there are Anne and your sister opposite. Thelwal comes in the evening ; he has been very poorly all day, and declined undertaking dinner ; he has been unstrung like his guitar, and he says his pulse does not make healthful music.”

My countenance fell. I was disappointed beyond expression at not seeing him. His illness might have been sympathetic with my own, but the gratifying thought was lost in the regret at finding him absent. I might ask a question of Sir James—men did not detect one’s winding way as our own sex did.

“ Has he been singing himself to death—is he the dying swan ?”

“ How very unkind—no, he is not dead, he is only very sentimental—but he must speak for himself. How very grandiose Drinkwater looks !”

The doctor was standing as upright as he could, as if hectoring over poor little Sir William. I could see him stretch out his leg and survey it with a

feeling of pride and pleasure, as if a double value was attached to a limb which Sir William dragged after him a useless appendage ; and I saw the doctor's eyes follow his fellow-sufferer with provoking triumph, which plainly said, "I am worth a dozen of you."

Mary looked at her husband with affection, and enjoyed his brief triumph. He was strutting his little hour upon a stage which might not long behold him ; and I heard Lady Morton observe, with her usual *laissez aller*, "Well, my husband does dangle his legs like two sticks : useless ornaments are they, to be sure, but I would not exchange him for any other man, though that man were a centipede. My husband's temper defies pain, and that turns pain into pleasure."

Dinner was announced. Sir William went stumping up to Lady Langham.

"My dear lady, you are not condemned to walk by the side of such a wretch as myself. Lord Elford will conduct you to the dining-room. I am the tail bound by necessity—ah, doctor, you are beyond me many degrees. Why, who says you have gout?"

Urged by this pleasing speech, the doctor put forth his whole man, and scrambled very respectably into the dinner-room with my mother under his arm. Sir William followed last, and seated himself by his lady. Mr. Charles Morton took the bottom of the table : he was a very respectable, thin,

precise young man, with a remarkably sharp nose ; carving with great propriety, and asking every lady in turn to do him the honour to take wine.

Sir William was charmed with his long table well crowded with human beings : “ Never less than five-and-twenty,” he remarked to Lady Langham, “ should sit at table in the country. If one lived in town, Lady Langham, a party of eight is the outside number ; but in the country, eight-and-twenty, if you can raise them, is not too large a force. Eight of us here now would be dead silence ; but though we are talking about nothing, five-and-twenty people talking about nothing make some sound.”

Lady Langham made a smiling answer, but I did not catch its purport : the company had set in to talk about nothing in good earnest, and the noise became overpowering : no one could hear his neighbour’s voice ; it was drowned in the tumultuous blending of sounds which issued from all parts of the table, and each individual to be heard was calling at the top of his voice. I was not interested in my supporter, Mr. Trollope, a friend of Mr. Charles Morton : his thin, wiry tones gave me a headache, and my mind was occupied : I sunk into silence, and Mr. Trollope resigned himself to the sweet influence of his other neighbour. The tumult lasted with determined spirit ; I saw the doctor give way at last, and sink back in his

chair, but the tide of speech rolled on, somewhat ebbing during the removal of the courses, and flowing again in fuller current. Sir William must have been truly gratified at the success of his dinner-party.

Lady Morton's bowing head terminated the scene, and we retired into the drawing-room. I was glad to find myself seated by Mary, and at peace; for the hilarity of the dining-room, the laughing, the eating, and drinking wine, had brought on severe headache, and I was feverish with uncertainty respecting Captain Thelwal's appearance. "Will he come? Is he really ill, or feigning illness to perplex me?" were my thoughts and anxiety during the period of taking coffee, and each time the door opened my heart beat with painful rapidity. My ear strained to catch the sound of the door-bell, but the hum of voices prevented any hope of success; I must endure the agonies of suspense in patience. At length sounds of voices were distinctly heard: the gentlemen entered: I saw Lord Elford, and Sir James Langham, and Mr. Clifden, and there was another figure following—yes, by my burning cheek and palpitating heart I knew it was him I sought—Captain Thelwal was in the room, and I turned to hide my confusion by addressing abrupt questions to my sister Mary.

CHAPTER II.

LORD ELFORD joined us, and drew a chair between Mary and myself: he said he was going to enjoy repose after the stormy debates which had succeeded our departure from the dining-room. His eye was attracted by my raised complexion.

“My dear Louisa, I wish I could say you looked sufficiently ill to prevail upon you to quit this gay scene: I shall be alarmed now upon other grounds. Mrs. Drinkwater, did you ever see your sister looking more brilliant? May I be allowed to feel jealous of that knot of admirers?” directing his and our attention to a group of young men who clustered together in a corner, commanded by Mr. Charles Morton.

“I think not,” said Mary, smiling, as she glanced over their thin black figures and curly heads, “you must postpone jealousy to-night.”

“Shall I be jealous in another quarter, Louisa ? raise your bright eyes a little to the left.”

I did so, and encountered the dark eyes of Thelwal. He appeared disconcerted at our notice, and walked on towards the group which contained Sir James and Lady Langham. I was distressed by Lord Elford’s observation. “If I was disposed to be jealous, it would be raised by a designing wretch like the captain ; luckily your taste rejects him. Do you mean to dance to-night ?”

“Certainly, Edmund.”

“Are you strong enough to endure the exercise ?”

“Perfectly equal to it, if there is to be any thing of the kind.”

There was a bustle round the piano, which looked very business-like, but the evening’s amusement was to begin with a concert. Lady Morton proposed a little vocal and instrumental music, because she considered it useful in bringing forward incipient talent, and Miss Clifden was going to sing.

Miss Clifden sat down and put back her shoulders, while Miss Ellen Clifden held the leaves to turn over. Silence was enforced, and the concert opened with “Oh, no, we never mention her.” Poor Miss Clifden sung out of tune naturally, but

her false chords proceeded from agitation. She was encored.

A concerto on the piano, by Miss Ellen Clifden, with a flute accompaniment, by Mr. Trollope, was our next treat; but silence was not so well observed. As the performers raced through their task, and the flute piped and puffed to keep its distance, urged on by the determined efforts of the piano, men's tongues became disclosed, and seemed to join the performers in their exertions. Dr. Drinkwater, who always took a seat by my mother, sat dozing, but patting his knee to appear absorbed in harmony. Sir William, delighted with the confusion of sounds, stood upon his crutches in the centre of the room, enjoying the idea of conferring perfect happiness upon his guests.

"I like this," he observed to his neighbour, Mr. Walker, who was fortunately hard of hearing. "I like to see every one happy and busy. Nothing can be better policy than a large party!"

Mr. Walker bowed, but heard nothing.

"You observe how much people have to say when they can't hear their own voices, and get over their shyness; it's like the hustings now, but a party of twelve would have held their tongues."

Mr. Walker again bowed in perfect ignorance.

"You see, Mr. Walker, they are all talking

about nothing:" and Sir William, remembering Mr. Walker's deafness, was beginning to talk extremely loud—"You see it is not quality but quantity, Mr. Walker, in the country."

"My dear Sir William, my dear Sir William," said Lady Morton, alarmed at the remark being proclaimed so loudly. "You are interrupting the concert."

Sir William smiled good-humouredly, and departed to the further end of his drawing-room, joined by the Doctor, whom my mother's generalship had wakened from his suspicious position. The two gentlemen were soon engrossed in deeply-interesting conversation, and I was at no loss to guess the subject under discussion. Sir William had given one of his crutches to be examined by the amateur eye of my brother-in-law, and there was frequent pointing on both sides to their feet and shoulders; their soul was in the subject, and they were together the remainder of the evening.

A few strong chords struck by the powerful finger of Lady Morton, gave notice that dancing was now the order of the moment, and the group of young men dispersed to seek their partners. My first effort was, of course, with Lord Elford; Thelwal stood on my right hand with Mary. I gave my attention entirely to my partner, and made

strong efforts to withdraw my thoughts from evil, but I did not succeed. Lord Elford accused me of wandering widely from the topic he had brought forward.

“ I am talking of Rubens’ pictures, Louisa ; and you reply, ‘ Is he ? ’ Who are you thinking of ? ”

I coloured, and tried to command my attention. “ The music and talking puzzle me,—tell me again ! ”

“ I was speaking of a magnificent Rubens, which hangs in the dining-room at Abbot’s Court. I was led to mention it from seeing your eyes fixed upon that Carlo Maratti. You enjoy a good picture ? ”

“ A good picture, Edmund ! — where are the pictures ? ” My mind was following Thelwal and Mary, as they chatted near me. I had observed no pictures ; though my eyes might have rested upon Carlo Maratti, I saw it not. I was listening to Thelwal’s voice.

“ You are quite lost, Louisa,—where is your attention straying, since I cannot command it ? ”

“ I know not. I am not myself this evening. I believe I was wrong in coming here. ”

“ Let me order the carriage when this quadrille ends. I must insist on your obliging me. What is this noise and nonsense compared to your feel-

ing unwell?" Lord Elford's head was thrown back—I knew the movement well ; it indicated determination.

" Do not point attention to me, Edmund ; I will not dance again ; but do not order the carriage."

" In this instance I am right, and your acquiescence will oblige me. Will you not oblige me, Louisa ?"

" If you insist upon returning, I suppose I must conform."

" Will it be ungraciously done ? Are my feelings of less importance to you than a carpet-dance for an hour or two ?" And Lord Elford's fine head was thrown back still further. I saw the storm rising.

" Put me somewhere in the shade then, Edmund ; and let me quit the room without witnesses, and I will allow you to order the carriage."

Lord Elford's head resumed its equilibrium ; and when the quadrille concluded, he left me seated on a sofa, in the dancing-room, while he prepared my mother for my departure, and ordered the carriage. In an instant Thelwal was beside me.

" You have not forgotten or repented your engagement with me, Miss Vansittart ?"

" I meant certainly to fulfil it, but I have been very ill to-day, and Lord Elford insists upon my returning home ; therefore I fear we must postpone our dancing together."

“ I will not relinquish that happiness. Oh, dance with me once ! We may never meet in this way again ; and Lord Elford will not deny me that consolation. Stand up with me now, I implore you ! ”

He took my hand, to lead me to the set at that moment forming.

“ I cannot—I dare not ! Let us remain here—I shall be sought for, long before that quadrille can end.”

Thelwal still held my hand. “ A man must be a monster not to wait patiently for your pleasure ! Dance with me ! I cannot trust myself with you here—I shall say what I ought not to utter. You must dance with me, indeed.”

I withdrew my hand ; but I would not stand up to dance.

“ You are afraid of Lord Elford—he is a tyrant to you,” said Thelwal, seating himself by me ; “ but how can he understand a real passion ? Cold, deliberate creature ! ”

“ What was your wish in engaging me, yesterday, Captain Thelwal ?—what was your important affair ? Tell me now, for I must not dance again.”

“ You will drive me from you if I tell it now. I resolved to be silent : it made me ill this morning, very ill—but I will be for once resolved to do right.” A deep sigh followed the sentence.

“ I am an excellent confidante,” I replied,

affecting ignorance of his meaning ; “ I will not betray your secret.”

“ You are almost a wife, I will not trust you !” he exclaimed, seizing my hand. “ My secret would be disclosed to one who possesses your heart, and from whom you can conceal nothing !”

“ Do not say so, do not say so, Heaven knows you speak falsely, I cried, clasping his hand in the agony of the moment, but letting it fall in horror at my own violent emotion. I believe the action was unobserved, but I had committed my feelings to the object who engrossed them. I sunk back in detestation of myself.

“ Dearest, dearest,” murmured Captain Thelwal, “ we can never bear this misery !—our hearts are too fondly linked to endure this strain upon our peace : must we part indeed and for ever ?”

Tears rushed to my eyes, and my bosom laboured with sighs.—“ Be silent, be silent, Thelwal, you undo me ! Go from me and let me recover my tranquillity—go from me and let me see you no more till—”

“ Till when ? Am I to be banished till you are a happy careless bride, too joyous to suffer from my sorrow, too much engaged to heed my misery ?”

The tone of Thelwal’s voice drove reason from me : its pathetic harmony roused every latent feeling.

“ Go, if you would not kill me,” I cried, tears

flowing rapidly, and my emotion increasing: "go, if you have one feeling of mercy, and leave me to my own regrets."

"I cannot leave you!" He offered to take my hand again. I snatched it from him.

"It is *his* hand, not yours. You allowed him to claim me when one word from your lips had changed my fate. I belong to him now, and I will not be touched!"

Thelwal soothed my feelings by his pleading, his self-condemnation, and remorse: the room was too public a theatre for gesture, but his voice had a potency irresistible to my heart, and I heard without resentment, nay, with deep satisfaction, a disclosure of his long-struggling attachment—an attachment of three or four weeks!—it was, however, of equal age with my own. I listened, and I could have sat listening for ever to words of passionate love and bitter self-reproach—but the spell was broken—Lord Elford came to claim me.

I rose from the sofa: Captain Thelwal's tone and manner underwent an immediate change. How could he so quickly appear at ease?

"I fear Miss Vansittart is fatigued, my lord: she has declined dancing, and her home is the best cordial. Is your carriage ready, or can I be useful in ordering it?"

Lord Elford politely declined his assistance; everything was already effected, and my mother

waited for me in the drawing-room. I took his arm, and paused to bid Thelwal good night. Thelwal bowed with the easy air of indifferent acquaintance, and accompanied us into the drawing-room. My mother was already shawled, taking leave of her friends, and the Drinkwaters were preparing to depart. There was a little pause previous to our quitting the room, for Sir William Morton had not quite finished his panegyric on a sleeping-draught which never failed to give him rest after a night of torment, and the doctor listened with the ardent attention of Desdemona, when she “seriously inclined” to the Moor’s account of the dangers he had past. During this pause I turned once more towards Thelwal to read his disappointment in his countenance: he was leading Miss Ellen Clifden to the waltzers.

There was something in this action that called up a thousand angry, wretched feelings. After the conversation of the last ten minutes, to leave me under Lord Elford’s care, and take a pale school-girl to join the waltz! After speaking of love and passionate regrets, to pass so easily to the bread and butter chat of a fat girl of sixteen! I was too indignant to cast one glance into the dancing-room; I could not endure such another vision; I was too anxious to reach my home and hide myself in darkness and despair. Dr. Drinkwater seemed

rooted to the spot, and my anxiety to depart from the now disgusting scene, swelled minutes into hours : I thought his horrible recipes for " what's-his-name " would never end : at last we did get away and the carriage-door was closed upon us. " Thank Heaven ! " burst from me, as we drove from the lights into the dark avenue, and I leaned my head back to still its throbbing.

" You have not enjoyed this party," whispered Lord Elford, as he placed my head against his shoulder ; " you were too fatigued to attempt it ; lean on my shoulder and close your eyes."

I did as I was requested ; but Lord Elford's shoulder was a pillow of thorns which destroyed instead of bestowing repose ; my heart felt stung with the irritating thought that Thelwal was at that moment waltzing with Ellen Clifden, and their figures whirled before my eyes till they struck fire with angry indignation. How he could suppress the appearance of disappointment instantly and so effectively, filled me with wonder and alarm. " Can he truly love ? " I thought ; " can he really feel the pangs he so eloquently described ? He may feel regret and vexation, but he can never feel as I feel now ! "

I could scarcely perceive objects when we arrived at home, so violently did my head throb with acute pain : I hastily bid my mother and Lord

Elford good night ; the latter came up to me with an anxious hope that I would not hurry down early in the morning.

“ Keep your room and rest, my dear Louisa, and I must do without you as well as I can for a few hours. You do look so pale !”

“ I am very tired, and I will take your advice and keep quiet. Good night.”

“ May angels bless you !” said Lord Elford, pressing my hands and forehead with his lips ; “ I think I love you better with your poor pale face than when it startles me by its brilliant bloom.”

“ Men do not think so in general.”

“ Mine is not a common love. — God bless you !”

I passed a weary, restless night, but I slept soundly as the first movements of the servants gave warning of a new day’s commencement. I was lulled by the housemaid upsetting a chair, and opening the shutters below, and when my mother and her guest were making a *tête-à-tête* breakfast, I was in a profound slumber.

I woke late, and found a letter placed on my pillow ; it was a double letter, sealed with black wax, and the postmark was London. I was somewhat amazed at its appearance. I had no London correspondent, and I could not guess its purport. I judged it to be some mistake, unless Mrs. Fortescue was addressing me to require private infor-

mation at my hands. But I was not excited enough to be interested in its contents. Lord Elford had sent up the letter, for he had pencilled on the outside, "Some despairing lover's plaint;" and I returned the letter into his hands through the housemaid's medium with the seal unbroken, and another pencilled inscription upon its cover, "Read it and save me trouble." I then courted another hour's repose.

My mother was seated at my bedside when I woke the second time: her face wore the elongated look which always betokened tidings of woe, and her eyes were full of tears. I started up.—

"What is the matter now, mother? Is the doctor ill—you have something disagreeable to tell me, have you not?"

"I have indeed good and evil to break to you," said my mother, trying to gain calmness of manner.

"First tell me the good," I cried, "it will give strength to endure the evil."

"The letter was from Mr. Turner Ellis's executors, stating his death; he has left you two thousand a year, for your life: your presence of course will be required in town."

I stared at my mother—was I mistress of two thousand a year, and Turner Ellis gone for ever? Would he never more stand between me and my quiet, or frighten my soul with the alarm of detection? Poor Turner Ellis! I could not quite de-

cide whether pain or pleasure preponderated as I dwelt upon the circumstance. Conscience would have cried loudly, but the legacy and the relief overpowered its lamentation. I remained some time silent: the news had been somewhat abruptly conveyed to me, and I could scarcely command my ideas, images crowded so rapidly through my mind. My mother waited patiently till my astonishment subsided, when I asked her a little fearfully—"And the bad news?"

I dreaded her reply: I expected to hear of something connected with Thelwal: scarcely any one had remarked upon our *tête-à-tête* the previous evening; I was preparing for a lecture.

"The enclosure," continued my mother, in a faltering voice, "was a letter from Mr. Ellis to yourself, and which Lord Elford read according to your pencilled orders."

"My God! I am ruined, mother," and I clasped my hands in a phrensy. "Where is Lord Elford, and what did he say? Oh, tell me now, and do not kill me with suspense!"

"Lord Elford," said my mother, "is on his way to London; your conduct has lost him for ever."

I fainted dead away.

What I endured in recovering to the sense of my loss of reputation and lover shall be left untold, for I can never express it in words or by pen.

Let me only record Lord Elford's shock at reading Mr. Ellis's last earthly complaint of his broken heart.

“ I feel I have not many weeks, perhaps days to live, my dearest young lady, and my mind turns with fondness to you even in death. I will not say a word in reproach for the wretched months I have passed since we parted, though I might say with justice I was not gently or justly treated. It may be, some other man may endure my miserable feelings whose riches may attract your notice ; but who will not, any more than I did, gain your heart. To save him such moments as I have spent, let me offer you a fortune which will place you beyond the necessity of marrying for this world's goods, and, my dear young lady, if it will make you happy, marry Captain Thelwal, whose name, while I write it, makes me tremble. You can give him now fortune, and that heart which I would have valued so greatly—which I have died to lose.—Be happy, dear young lady. The thought of saving you distress is my comfort now. I am sure you tried to like me, but how could you succeed at my time of life ? and I was very wrong to suppose myself loved ; but oh, dear Miss Louisa, why did you smile upon an old man, and then turn to like another ? It has destroyed all the happy quiet of our lives, for my poor sister frets, and I am not able to rouse myself : however, I

pray for tranquillity, and it is coming to me slowly but surely, for I am going to Him who made us all, and sent us here to be happier than I think we ever allow each other to be. I pray for your happiness and well-doing, and when I think of that bright and beautiful face, it seems to me extraordinary that I should have presumed to believe it could smile on a blighted thing like me. I can even wish Captain Thelwal happy as your husband. He was a pleasant gentleman and very kind to me when my accident happened, but I think he will not worship you as I have done. God bless and protect you. My best comfort is in thinking I have provided for your happy establishment: you will not now marry an old man and care for a young one. That must be sad misery, and your lovely face would fade with woe, as my poor frame is sinking under it. Farewell, dearest Miss Louisa—farewell, dear young lady.

“TURNER ELLIS.”

Lord Elford sat some minutes in profound silence after reading these lines: at length he placed the letter in my mother's hand, and signed to her to read it also; after which he relapsed into meditation. On perusing the contents, my mother sat in silence as unbroken as his own, unable to utter one sound, and feeling distress for the internal struggle

which was evidently affecting her unhappy companion. Lord Elford rose and took one or two rapid strides across the apartment, as if to conquer some rising emotion, and then he stood before my mother.

“I would spare you and myself, Mrs. Vansittart, this scene, but I must not hesitate now. After this wretched exposition of facts, you cannot be surprised at my bidding you farewell. I cannot see *her*, Mrs. Vansittart,—I cannot witness her shame and distress; and I cannot tell *her* how my heart scorns a woman who has deliberately given her mind to falsehood. I can understand it all now, and I pity her from my soul. Tell her we meet no more, and bid her reflect before she increases the number of her victims.” Lord Elford pressed her hand, and kept it some moments in his agitated grasp: he then quitted the room and the house.

The storm broke over him at the Hermitage, where he had fled for refuge. He insisted upon an interview with Lady Langham; and implored her to conceal nothing from his knowledge which was now necessary to his peace to be acquainted with.

“You were *her* friend in the Isle of Wight, tell me truly, as you hope for mercy, was she engaged to Mr. Ellis?”

Lady Langham could not deny it.

“And why was the engagement dissolved? fear me not, Lady Langham, but you have no right to deceive me.”

“Certainly not, my lord. Mr. Ellis considered my friend’s affection for him too uncertain for his happiness, and he withdrew from Ryde.”

“Mr. Ellis broke the engagement, because your friend gave her attentions to Captain Thelwal? Was it not so?”

“It was certainly his expressed reason to me: I cannot deny it.”

“You are dealing truly and nobly by me. I have another question to ask: Was there much intimacy between your friend and Lady Anne O’Brien at Bath?”

“There was, and it behoves me to say, my lord, the intimacy was strongly objected to by her friends, as also every other unhappy event in my friend’s thoughtless career.”

Lord Elford bowed. “I know enough, Lady Langham, and I pity the poor distressed parent I have just quitted; but would you have thought there was falsehood in that face? Would you have believed there was duplicity in that beautiful form—in that youthful and fair being?” Here Lord Elford became powerfully affected, and his voice trembled as he spoke.

“I sought her among a thousand to give her a

heart which worshipped her artless manners, and they too were all false ! She would have married me with her heart breathing love for another ! She would have sold her beauty to my coronet, and stung me to the soul with a bartered, chilled appearance of affection, when she was doting upon a man who requites her not !”

Lady Langham endeavoured to soothe his distress, but it was too newly raised to bear consolation.

“Let me mourn to you, Lady Langham, for with you my grief is sacred, and this will soon pass away. The disappointed deceived feelings must chafe for a time till reason exerts its power, and the mind can take in its whole load of evidence. It is painful to think how I must despise one who has wound so closely round my heart, and it is frightful to begin to tear a love from my soul which seems a part of itself.”

“Time perhaps may rectify the errors of her nature,” said Lady Langham, “and this event may strike conviction of her fault, and ensure a true repentance. She is young.”

“Never, never,” replied Lord Elford, “time will do nothing ! Falsehood and cold-blooded deception never give way to time. Suffering may do much, but time will only strengthen their growth—no, I have not a hope to grasp at—I am gone forth

miserable, but not lost. I am deceived, but I am not a credulous, despised husband ! I am free, and not a gazingstock for the world to jeer at !”

This idea gave rise to a new train of thought in Lord Elford’s mind, and pride gave him power to recover his calmness of manner. He was some hours at the Hermitage, but he remained secluded in Sir James Langham’s study : no one intruded upon his sorrow, and Captain Thelwal did not appear before him. When he had received notice that all was ready, that his curricule was waiting, and all arrangements concluded, by his valet, Lord Elford had a conference with his friend Langham, to whom he detailed his future plans. He lingered some time ere he could utter farewell ; for every spot reminded him of past pleasure. Once more Sir James hinted repentance, but his friend repelled the attractive bait.

“ Do not seek to disturb my resolutions,” he said, mournfully. “ Nature is weak, but I will not exchange present regret for a future unavailing misery. We shall meet again when all this will be forgotten, or remembered as a painful dream.”

He put out his hand, received the silent but warm pressure of adieu, and Lord Elford was soon on his way to town. He was to proceed immediately to the continent.

My unenviable situation may be imagined. Lord Elford’s sudden departure gave rise to various con-

jectures, but not one of them approaching the truth, and my good fortune became bruited in all societies. I cannot say I regretted the simple fact of being released from my engagement. I was now free, and possessed of fortune equal to my wishes. Now I was a match to be desired and sought, and if Thelwal really loved me, I could offer him wealth, and all the affection of an impetuous woman's nature. I loved him fondly : his uncertain and capricious attentions had soothed and wounded me in turn, till his image was indelibly fixed in my heart : I was now free to accept this dangerous man who had foiled me with my own weapons, and if I married him, I might be yet happy, and forget the follies of my single state. I had always borne the first shock of my calamities in bed, and there I now remained till I became familiarized to my situation : shame, mortification, and regret, warred within me for some time, but I rose superior to my miseries. I loved Thelwal too well to bear the loss of his society, which was now my dearest anxiety, and my good fortune would close the lips of the multitude, who only point at poverty.

My mother accompanied me to London to arrange the necessary forms, and take possession of my lifehold income, which was to pass to Miss Ellis, her heirs and assigns, at my demise. I remained some days enjoying the pleasures of a metropolis viewed by me for the first time, and when

business no longer delayed our return, we set forth to our own home.

I was quickly surrounded by comforts through the blessed agency of my lover. I dressed magnificently, and I was mistress of the prettiest equipage in the country. My society was extremely necessary now to those who had formerly scorned "that odious flirt, Louisa Vansittart," and the Mortons sent me repeated invitations, conveyed dexterously and politely by Mr. Charles Morton in person: I flirted with all and any, but I was betrothed to Thelwal. This was my third engagement, and to a superstitious mind it might sound prophetic of evil: three was ever a luckless number.

Captain Thelwal saw me before I went up to town, and pressed his suit with impatient entreaty. He told me I was long his own by our mutual affection, and now the horrible bar was withdrawn—he cared not by what means—he would not endure another hour's suspense.

"Take me, Louisa, and mould me to your wishes: we have loved each other and plagued each other, but let us now end this misery, and be all and everything to each other."

My heart was in his hand, my lips pronounced the words, and we were plighted to pass through life together, and make its path of thorns a path of roses to each.

"But tell me, Thelwal," I said, as he knelt to

thank me for the treasure of my love, “tell me what passed between Mrs. Fortescue and yourself, for there were some passages which I must be made acquainted with. You loved her, Thelwal?”

“Oh never, my love, never. When we were children together I admired and proposed to pretty Susan Langham, but she was engaged to Fortescue, and I was grateful for my deliverance. I meant to have flirted with her when we met again at the Hermitage, but you were here, and my heart was captivated. Talk not of Mrs. Fortescue, but tell me about yourself, and listen to my determination not to be a bachelor another month.

“Nay, not so quickly done, Thelwal. Wait three months, and I will offer no objections. Will my fortune secure you happiness, Thelwal? I shall not be a portionless bride. I can bring my husband the luxuries he has been accustomed to enjoy, and your wife will not prove a tie. Will two thousand a-year satisfy your wishes?”

Oh, it was only myself he courted. Riches without united hearts was splendid infamy, he could not endure the disgusting idea: our union taking place in devoted affection was independent of wealth, and life would be a dream of happy certainty. I believed him. We agreed to separate for three months, and communicate by a close correspondence, but our engagement was to be secret from all the world. When all my affairs were trans-

acted, and a certain period had elapsed, in some measure to quiet observation, then, in spite of all opposition, in defiance of counsel and parental injunction, I swore to meet him at the altar and pronounce my vows. I pledged myself, by all I held sacred, to believe no rumour which malignity might invent to influence me against him, and a long embrace sealed the mutual compact. I was happy at last: all my fears and miseries were dispersed—I was Thelwal's bride by my own concurrence, and I could suffer no more those cruel fears and alarms which had long cost me my peace of mind. I was rich, and Thelwal faithful; I had no wish to dive into futurity, and I never did incline to consult the past. Lord Elford was totally and completely forgotten.

When I returned from town, Captain Thelwal disappeared from the Hermitage, and I was soon plunged into a round of amusements. My mother was never interrupted in her Grange visits, for I was rarely at my own home. So many families discovered my talent for being agreeable, I was not allowed to excuse myself from the invitations which poured in from all sides, and the nephews and male cousins who found it suddenly the most delightful neighbourhood in England, rallied round my standard, and vied in delicate attentions. Mr. Charles Morton stood pre-eminently forward; he did not incommode me with speeches, for his forte

lay in silence, but he was constantly before me and near me, and Lady Morton never tired in apostrophizing the merits of her son. She also recommended every one to marry, and often attacked me on the subject.

"I think every fine young woman should marry for protection and happiness. I married very happily myself, and have never regretted entering the state. Sir William, to be sure, has an excellent temper, which is the only important ingredient in matrimony; everything else can be adjusted by a little management, but you cannot give temper. Sir William's temper was always gentle. I am happy to think he has transmitted it to his son. Charles is quite his father in temper."

"It must be a valuable gift," I replied.

"With your fortune and personal attractions, my dear Miss Vansittart, you should choose a proper protector."

"I mean to do so, Lady Morton."

"I would choose," continued her ladyship, "from my friends and neighbours who know and value one's real character, and are not attracted by mere fortune—a stranger is to be suspected in every respect."

"I could not fancy a stranger, Lady Morton; when I marry it will be to a man of whom I think highly, and of whose affection I do not doubt."

"You have good sense, Miss Vansittart; but is

there no happy man about here whom you are disposed to favour? We have several nice young men around you."

"I hate nice men!"

"Well," said her ladyship, laughing, "I have destroyed my recommendation by my unfortunate expression. I will say no more about them. I believe you ride with Charles to-day? He says it is a perfect treat to see you on horseback, and I assure you he is no mean judge."

Lady Morton did all a mother could do for her son's advancement; but she could not compel him to be agreeable. He did his "possible" to meet her views, by being always in attendance; and I amused myself with his prim efforts at playing the lover's part. He placed me carefully on horseback, helped me to dismount comfortably, rode by my side in silence, and asked me to take wine at dinner. Beyond these observances, Mr. Charles Morton could achieve nothing. If Sir William had his hopes, he concealed them from my observation; he, probably, trusted to the most natural means of success—the attentions of the young man himself; but he did not attempt to assist his lady in urging him forward beyond his powers, or allow me to ridicule him as a match-making parent. He appeared perfectly indifferent to all that was passing.

At last, Mr. Charles Morton spoke: we were returned from a silent ride, and I was bowing past

him into the hall, when he craved permission to speak to me.

“Certainly, Mr. Morton ; but if you had anything to say, I wish you had favoured me with its purport during our dull ride ; it would have relieved the tedium.”

Mr. Charles Morton looked amazed at my reply, and felt doubtful whether this was precisely the right moment to prefer his suit. I waited an instant to allow him time to recover his composure, then hastily resumed—

“Pray, Mr. Morton, let me hear quickly what you have to say ; I am rather hurried.”

“Allow me to follow you into the breakfast-room, Miss Vansittart, and I will explain myself.”

I advanced into the breakfast room, followed by Mr. Morton, in a tight, swallow-tailed coat, and very creaking boots. He begged me to be seated.

“If you please, I will remain standing—it refreshes me, after my long seat on horseback.”

“I think you must have seen my devotion, Miss Vansittart,”—he hesitated much,—“you must have been aware of my feelings—my admiration.”

“Indeed, I have not been aware of anything but your silence, Mr. Morton ; I have decided you to be the most silent man of my acquaintance.”

“Silence shews respect, Miss Vansittart,”—poor Mr. Morton coloured violently, and could not re-

gain his self-command; my *brusquerie* had quite discomposed him.

“It may shew respect, Mr. Morton, but it never did and never will make a gentleman agreeable. I believe I understand you, but my affections are engaged, and have been given away some time.”

“I really did not know—I heard—” stammered poor Mr. Morton, in piteous confusion.

“I have no doubt you have heard many extraordinary and untrue reports,” I replied; “but I am not able to give hope to any gentleman; and you must excuse my being very plain-spoken.”

Mr. Morton bowed sorrowfully, but had nothing to reply. I held out my hand—“Let us be friends, and think no more of this conversation. Now I will trouble you to put my whip on the hall table, and just see if it has struck five o’clock—I am sure we are late.”

Mr. Morton bowed profoundly, and mechanically obeyed my orders. When I heard his boots creaking in the hall, I escaped to my room, and appeared no more till dinner was announced. Lady Morton chatted gaily as usual, but a large spot on her cheek shewed her feelings were wounded, and her eye glanced frequently upon her son. I told Lady Morton, after dinner, I must return home the following morning; and as nothing was said to dissuade me from my measures, of course the refusal had been made known.

I heard regularly from Thelwal. He was trying to wile away the dreary weeks by accepting a round of invitations among his friends. All perceived his melancholy air, and ridiculed his love for some fair, cruel, country damsel. They had carried him from one gay company to another to lay the evil spirit, but, as he fondly wrote—

“ ‘ They bid me seek in change of scene
The charms that others see ;
But were I in a foreign land,
They’d find no change in me !’

No : I am only yours, Louisa, and when will you recal me ? Am I to be banished for ever, or does your heart long to say, ‘ Come, Thelwal, come, and be mine for ever ?’ I await your summons.”

I did long to behold him again ; my time passed wearily without his society, and my eyes ached to rest upon that form which was never absent from my imagination. I had only to encounter my mother’s prejudices, and argue her into an apparent consent to my marriage, and all would go smoothly on. My independent fortune secured me from restraints, and my temper braved all hazards. I therefore opened the affair at once to my mother’s indignant notice. She was silent till I had laid my intentions before her, and spoken copiously on the subject for half an hour ; when I paused, her reply was short and decided.

“ You are your own mistress, Louisa, and of course my opinion will avail nothing. If you insist upon marrying Captain Thelwal, Lady Langham will perhaps give the ceremony the sanction of her presence. You will not expect your mother to appear at such ill-starred nuptials.”

I was not prepared for this exertion of spirit on my mother's part, and I was for some moments silent : she was herself distressed, but made efforts to appear knitting in tranquillity.

“ I think, mother, you need not set your face so decidedly against a man who cannot have offended you : what are your objections to Captain Thelwal ? Perhaps you will have the goodness to state them to me.”

“ I object to his character in every respect : I object to your conduct with equal force. Captain Thelwal is evidently marrying you for your fortune, and such a man will not make you happy. I warned you of his specious manners when you first became engaged to Lord Elford :”—here my poor parent's utterance became indistinct, and her knitting fell from her hands—she resumed, “ You have a third time engaged yourself without my knowledge, and chosen a man whom I disapprove. I cannot follow you through your wretched course of actions : every event of your life has taken place without consulting your mother or your friends, and I will not give my sanction to this marriage.”

“ If I have been so wrong-headed, my dear mother, it will be a relief to you to get emancipated from the responsibility of such a creature as myself. My marriage will be a blessing to you all, you will not be distressed by further untowardness.” I spoke in a tone of bitterness.

“ Not quite so free as you anticipate, Louisa. I have seen your folly and vanity, and suffered by them, but time and repentance might lessen and reform those evils: but time and repentance only increase the misery of an ill-assorted marriage; and I would rather see you suffer now than be plunged in sorrows which I could not alleviate, and must weep over.”

“ I have no fears of the evil you prophesy, mother: my opinion of Captain Thelwal is unshaken.”

“ Then we will revert no more to the subject: I will not see or receive Captain Thelwal.”

“ I must marry from the Hermitage, I suppose, then?”

“ You will decide for yourself.”

This was very annoying, but the conversation dropped, and I felt unable to resume it: I was startled by my mother's resolution, and there was a calmness in her expression of it which assured me it was unalterable. I must try my powers with Lady Langham: her remarks would be all gentleness I knew, and perhaps Sir James and herself

might influence my mother's determination. I drove to the Hermitage.

I had a long and stubborn conflict with Lady Langham, but she effected no change in my resolves. Thelwal had attained too powerful dominion over my affection to allow his image to be defaced. In vain Lady Langham placed before me the sin of disobedience—the heartlessness of Thelwal—my own offences. I defended every position.

At my age, with independent property, it was very hard I could not marry to please myself; it was also very easy to fix heartlessness upon Thelwal, but not so easy to prove it; I had been unfortunate in some few transactions, but no one passed through life without errors or misfortunes.

Lady Langham perceived the uselessness of contention, it had been so at all times with me, and now in this particular point, on which my heart was fixed beyond all power of change, it was not likely I should succumb to the wishes of my friends. Sir James had a long conference with my mother upon the subject; she was as firm in her determination not to give her countenance to the marriage as I was in my stubborn resolution to marry in defiance of every opposition. Sir James felt, with his lady, that all hope of breaking off the connexion was ended, and my obstinacy must be my punishment in this world: further remark was hopeless. It was

at last finally settled that Captain Thelwal should be summoned to the Hermitage the day previous to the ceremony taking place, and, if possible, the Drinkwaters might be prevailed upon to attend me to church. Sir James Langham declined giving me away, but that was of little importance; Captain Bates was bound to do my bidding, in consideration of my having listened to his folly under recent circumstances, and I had no alarms at his daring to rebel. I summoned Captain Thelwal, and coolly prepared for my change of situation.

Captain Bates could not decline my request: he was to attend my summons at any moment, but my brother-in-law, the doctor, gave himself true matrimonial airs. "He would attend the marriage himself," he wrote word, "but his wife should not appear to sanction any action in defiance of a mother's frown." I cared not: all these vexatious oppositions must increase Thelwal's gratitude to myself. He would love me dearer for the battles I had fought single-handed in his cause, and I felt equal to any thing which might occur to displease me in a continued opposition. At length the day approached. My mother retired to the Grange, and would not see me the last day of my singlehood. She left a letter stating her reasons for so doing.

"I do not leave my home, Louisa, in anger," were her words—"I quit it in silent sorrow at a conduct which deeply wounds me as a mother, and

which I will not stay to witness. When you have felt the scourge which ever accompanies disobedience, it will be too late for me to assist you, and I might have been spared the knowledge of troubles which must reach me if my life is lengthened. You have my wishes, my prayers for happiness, but my blessing is withheld: what blessing can take effect upon a child flying in the very face of a weeping parent, to form a union with coldhearted selfishness?"—Such was my mother's letter, written in unsteady characters, and fresh from her sorrowing heart!—I did not feel its justice; I resented its harshness.—Since all desert me Thelwal must be everything to me—his love must be my shield and reward,—ah, how great a reward after all my conflicts!

I was married. I went to church attended by Captain Bates and Lady Langham; Sir James Langham, the Doctor, and Thelwal, were waiting my appearance in the church. The latter met me with a raised complexion and in great agitation: he had been in misery, he said, ever since our separation, but he was now happy. How I gazed upon him! how fondly, how madly I worshipped him!

We were married. No congratulation took place!—no compliments:—how could they—my mother was absent; Mary was not allowed to smile upon me; Charlotte was in utter ignorance of the event which had taken place! Lady Langham did not

she shook my hand at parting : Sir James only bowed, and the Doctor walked with great difficulty from the altar : I was giving him another attack of gout to add to Mary's grievances. Captain Bates stood in amazed silence, and went mechanically through the form of giving me away. It was an inauspicious wedding. My carriage with four post-horses drove up to the church gate, and gave the first intelligence of my marriage to the public ear and eye. I tried to appear easy and happy ; but all these circumstances deadened my powers, and laid a weight upon my spirits, which I vainly endeavoured to dispel ; yet I was now his bride whom my soul loved, and nothing but death could divide us. Sir James Langham handed me to my carriage : I glanced at Lady Langham, and caught her eye fixed upon me with an expression which is even now fresh in my recollection : it was a look of such hopeless pity ! Captain Thelwal bowed to the silent group, and sprung into the carriage : all was over ; the door closed with a sharp sudden noise which startled me, and I was carried with rapidity from my home.

“Miss Louisa Vansittart was married privately, after all, to that quiet captain at the Hermitage ! No party—no bells rung, no finery, no relations present, no anything to make a display, after all her flirtations with lords and esquires. You just wait, Miss Bates, and see what all this will end in !

She did not use poor Alfred ill for nothing. Madam will have a downfall in spite of her large fortune."

This was said by Mrs. Jones, and assented to by Miss Bates.

"Shew me the woman, Mrs. Jones, who ever got any thing by interfering with other women's lovers, and by being vain of her beauty."

"John might just as well have told me," continued Mrs. Jones, "the match was to take place."

"It would have been soon known to the whole district," said her husband, looking over his spectacles.

"I don't mind your inuendoes, Mr. Jones."

"When I wish to preserve a secret, I never confide it to you, my dear Mrs. Jones."

"I never wish to hear them, Mr. Jones, I hate secrets and gossiping of all kinds."

Mr. Jones made no reply. It was vain to try and withdraw a veil of forty years' wear, which Mrs. Jones had drawn between herself and her foibles. He allowed his lady, therefore, to proceed in her remarks to her friend.

"You may depend upon it the match will be a bad affair; I firmly believe Captain Thelwal will be taken up for bigamy. There must be something very wrong when relations are not present, and I am surprised Captain Bates should lend himself to such an affair."

Miss Bates had nothing to say on that subject, since she was equally ignorant of the whole proceeding.

“I might have been asked to attend the ceremony, I think, Miss Bates: the vicar’s lady would have done no discredit to a runaway sort of match, but I am glad I was not in the business; it’s a miserable affair, and I am happy in not being mixed up with it. No one can come to me for information, and I hate detailing scandal.”

CHAPTER III.

“THANK Heaven we are off those stones, and not worried with bell-ringing,” said Thelwal, as we drove quickly past the last vestige of our quiet village. I was struck by the impatience of the tone in which the sentence was uttered, and turned my head towards him. The movement restored him to composure.

“I mean, my love, the jolting of these ill-paved villages destroys the carriage-springs. Do you always travel with this lot of packages?”

A small bandbox was the only package placed inside the carriage.

“A morning cap, my love; we must have caps, you know,” I said laughingly. “Does that small box incommode you?”

“Women should only wear caps when they have red hair,” observed Thelwal.

“I shall never wear them if you object to their appearance, Thelwal.”

“I shall never interfere in your dress, my dear ; wear whatever you please : if I do not happen to admire your selection, others may.”

“I shall care very little for other people’s admiration, Thelwal ; I should certainly be anxious for yours, but yours only.”

“Oh ! that did very well some time ago, my dear, but we are married now, and must do as others do.”

“Yes, we have been married nearly an hour, I forgot.” Thelwal smiled at my observation.

“Let us understand each other, Louisa. We are now a married couple, and like the rest of married couples we shall have many things to bear and forbear ; perhaps the sooner we face our troubles the better. We shall always be very much attached to each other, but we will not become uxorious. Dress as your own taste suggests ; I have always admired your style of dress, but if others approve you rest assured I shall do the same. A man soon forgets what his wife is in personal attractions, but he is proud to hear her commended, and I shall admire you through the report of society.”

This was chilling to my heart. I loved Thelwal through good and evil “report,” and perhaps loved him best when least commended. I was on the point of reply, but he changed the subject.

“We will not remain long in town; the place is deserted now, suppose we take a trip to Paris for a few months?”

“Let us go there, by all means; only, Thelwal, speak kindly and gently to me.”

“Am I not affection itself, my dear?”

“I think not in your remarks.”

“Have I not given you *carte blanche* to dress as you please? What more can a lady desire?”

“I desire your love, Thelwal; I cannot exist without the love for which I have sacrificed so much.”

“My dear, I love you to distraction; now let us be reasonable and chat agreeably.”

I could not chat very agreeably, but a little warmth of manner, and a smile freely bestowed, soon renewed my hopes and spirits. We reached town the afternoon of the third day, and occupied apartments at Fladong's. Thelwal was soon surrounded with friends, who came to stare at his bride, and congratulate him on his marriage. Town was empty; October was not a month for gaiety, but the class of intimates who came constantly to Fladong's were not a high or very polished grade of society. My husband, however, appeared happy to receive them, and the month of our sojourn in town we were constantly engaged in water-parties, though very late in the season, dinner-company, and every amusement which London still offered

to the lingerer. I did not at all approve of one or two gentlemen introduced to me as my husband's very particular friends: little as I had seen of life, my taste rejected the familiar address and slang conversation of Major Smithe. I objected also to his constant demands upon my husband's time. He was rarely ever with me alone, and, recent as our marriage had been, I was allowed to remain long hours, and sometimes whole mornings, in solitary musing. This was not the matrimony I had anticipated. In these lonely hours my thoughts flew back to my home, my mother, Mary, and Charlotte, who had never learned my change of name from myself. Like a thief I had quitted my parent's house, and the secrecy of my engagement to Thelwal proved my own knowledge of its folly. I wrote to my mother now, entreating her pardon for the step I had taken, and imploring her to write often a long account of all those I had left in silence and ignorance of my flight. I waited in anxious hope for her reply; day by day my heart beat as the hour approached for delivering letters, and tears would fall when the waiter replied to my eager inquiry, "No letters this morning, ma'am." At last it arrived, and I wept with pleasure over the handwriting of a mother, whose kindness had never been valued as it was in this third week of my lonely honeymoon. Mary added a postscript, and Charlotte would write soon. My

mother wrote most kindly. She was glad to hear I was well and happy, which she could not say of her own health and feelings : everyone had been thunderstruck with the very sudden intelligence of my marriage, particularly the Mortons. The doctor was very gouty, and she had not herself an idea that he ever would be better. A letter from Charles announced his arrival at Malta with his regiment, and his spirits were excellent in contemplating the gradual termination of the twelvemonth which was to separate him from Emma Brereton. He should not be able to obtain leave of absence, probably, at the moment he might wish, but he should not be debarred from corresponding with her. The Langhams were well. The Bateses were never seen ; Captain Bates it was thought was getting into ill health, for he grew thin, and could not be drawn from his fireside. There was a cessation of all gaiety, and families were resuming their pristine stillness ; the Hermitage was no longer a resort to the gay, as Lady Langham was not very well. Charlotte was going to present her husband with an heir.

How all these trivial matters interested me now ! How I read and re-read circumstances which a few weeks previously I should have considered insufferably tiresome ! I kept my letter open before me to refer constantly to its contents. My sister Charlotte, whom I really loved, I had never visited

since my accession of fortune. I was fearful of being asked questions which I could not answer agreeably, and the attentions of uninteresting people had consumed time which would have been far more properly given to Charlotte and Mary. I was reading my letter for the eighth time when Thelwal entered, after a protracted absence. He threw himself upon the sofa, yawning with fatigue.

“ I want my dinner now, what are these waiter-rascals about? Who is your letter from?”

“ My mother,” I replied, going to him, and saluting his flushed cheek: “ you are very much heated, my dear Thelwal; where have you been all this long morning? I wanted you to walk with me and talk to me.”

“ Can’t be tied to your apron-string, my dear: why did you not call for Mrs. Smithe, or Lady Emily Turton; they would have been glad to drive with you.”

“ I would rather have your society, my love.”

“ Sorry for that, because my mornings are indispensably engaged; but what does the old lady say?”

The old lady! My blood rose: true, I had fled from my mother in anger and disgrace, but my trespass was not to degrade her in my husband’s estimation: hot tears rushed into my eyes, but I was silent. I loved Thelwal too well to offend.

My silence was useless.

“What does the old girl say? I want to hear the news.”

“The old girl is pleased to hear I am well—and happy, my love.”

“To be sure; we shall always be happy, or say we are, which is the same thing: but what else, what is Langham doing?”

“They are all well and very quiet.”

“Anything else?”

“Nothing of importance; perhaps you will like to read it?”

“No, thank you, I make a point of reading no letters but those addressed to myself. Your correspondence is safe from me, and I expect mine will be equally sacred to you; I never did approve of man and wife opening each other’s letters.”

“I thought there was but one interest between them,” I replied, trying to restrain my alarm and indignation.

“The deuce you did! when could you have been born, and where could you have been educated?”

“Thelwal,” I exclaimed, unable to contain myself,—“Thelwal, you are a wretch!”

“Then you have double reasons for avoiding my letters, Louisa; but don’t discompose yourself, as I hate scenes: when shall we dine, my dear?” and Thelwal rose from his reclining attitude.

I could not tell, it was ordered at six o’clock; I

had no appetite, and cared not if dinner never made its appearance.

Thelwal took up a newspaper and was occupied with its contents till dinner was announced; I wept silently.

Major Smithe came in as we were sitting down to table, and my husband's countenance lighted up with satisfaction.

"Smithe, you are most welcome; just in time to prevent a matrimonial *tête-à-tête*, sit down, my friend, and while Mrs. Thelwal is delicately helping us to fish, tell me what brought you to us."

The major looked softly and insinuatingly at me: he was a very disagreeable man to my taste, though many women would have considered him handsome. I disliked a low cunning which lurked in his eye and pervaded his whole manners and conversation.

"What many fellows would give for such a *tête-à-tête*, Thelwal!"

"You are complimentary, but you are not here by accident. Let us know the motive which has given us the pleasure, major. What has brought you from Richmond?"

"Yourself: we must have you to-morrow, and I have brought a note from Mrs. Smithe to your lady, entreating her presence: I hope no pre-engagement will deprive us of so much pleasure, Mrs. Thelwal."

“You are very polite,” I replied, with a strong touch of my old *hauteur*. “I am sorry I shall not be able to accept Mrs. Smithe’s invitation.”

“We shall both be with you, Smithe: is it the old set—six o’clock, and short whist?”

“Precisely the same; but, my dear Mrs. Thelwal, I hope you will smile upon us?”

“Mrs. Thelwal will be very happy to accompany me, Smithe: where is Turton?”

“At the old place as usual—he never has luck.”

Major Smithe remained with us late: I retired early into the sitting-room: the gentlemen took their coffee in the dining-room and did not appear till the major rose to depart. I dwelt upon my mother’s letter, and her indifferent account of her health and spirits: “she was glad to hear I was well and happy”—tears trickled down my cheeks—I had indeed told her so, but I was far from happy. I began to tremble lest Thelwal was the creature my friends had so often placed before my imagination, and which my mind rejected as harsh and untrue. Had I married any other man my temper would not have endured one word of irony or unkindness; but when a woman loves fondly, her nature seems to change, and I weepingly but silently bore much from my husband which was harsh, and which a woman never meets in so young a matrimony. Thelwal had not been actually brutal—he would never probably be so

unmanly ; but from the first hour of our marriage he had not been affectionate, or encouraged its display in myself. All softness and persuasion in my single days, he did not appreciate the youth, beauty, and fortune I gave him against all counsel, and which at least demanded gentle treatment. He was content to leave me alone for whole mornings, without accounting for his absence, and any question on my part concerning his movements was sure to be received with angry feelings. Was this the reward of my heavy sacrifices ?

Major Smithe's departure gave rise to my first really severe collision with my husband. I had persisted in declining Mrs. Smithe's invitation, and Thelwal's angry expression of countenance gave notice of a rising storm : I did not heed the signs of the times ; I replied to Major Smithe's repeated hopes of my change of mind with coldness and determination—"I was sorry, but I was not well enough to dine at Richmond the following day ; I must beg to be excused." The major departed in disappointment, and I was left with my offended husband. It was some time ere our silence was broken, but at last the thunder broke over my head.

"I wish to know, Mrs. Thelwal, your reasons for presuming to contravene my wishes, and decline dining at Richmond to-morrow ?"

"I cannot bear going there, Thelwal : I do not

like Mrs. Smithe, or Lady Emily Turton, her bosom friend; and though I am lonely enough here, I prefer it to their society."

"You will be so good as to make no objections to my friends, Mrs. Thelwal, and I insist upon your accompanying me to-morrow."

"I am really ill, my love, and must decline."

"I will admit of no excuse, Mrs. Thelwal: I do not choose to be considered henpecked by my friends."

"What does that signify, Captain Thelwal?—only cowards fear that silly imputation."

"A woman who runs counter to her friends in her single life, may be suspected of wishing to traverse her husband's plans."

"I made too great a sacrifice, Captain Thelwal, to endure that from you. A man who urges a woman to be disobedient, should make some allowance for her errors."

"A truce to vulgar reproaches and retorts, Mrs. Thelwal: do you accompany me to-morrow?"

"I do not."

"Then, Mrs. Thelwal, we part; for I will not live with an obstinate, headstrong wife."

"Oh, no, no, Thelwal!"—I cried impetuously—"don't threaten me with desertion. If you leave me, where could I hide my head? I will go with you to-morrow; but speak gently to me, and not in that cold, ironical strain. I never could be

guided by harsh measures, but kindness will do much."

"You will accompany me to Richmond, then?" said my husband, in a pleased and gentle tone.

"Yes, I will go anywhere with you, if you are indulgent; but do not speak harshly, for I have been a self-willed, impetuous creature all my life."

"It will not answer in matrimony, Louisa. You must restrain your feelings. I hope I have not married a violent woman, or, what would annoy me still more, a weeping one."

I made a notable effort to act upon this hint, and dashed away a few scalding tears.

"I will do anything to please you, dearest Thelwal; but you know not my horror of those ladies with whom I am expected to associate."

"And what is your objection to my friends' wives? What have they done to offend you?"

"Nothing exactly towards myself; but there is something in their manners so unlike Lady Langham, and Mary, and Mrs. Brereton. I feel disgusted, though I cannot bring forward any actual wrong."

"You are too nice, Louisa; you must not expect in general society the straitlaced notions of your squeamish acquaintance in Gloucestershire; the world is a different place from H—; but you are a good girl to conform to my wishes, and I am pleased with you."

This was the kindest speech I had received from my husband since I had become a wife, and the honeymoon was not yet over ; its effect was electric, and I burst into tears of joy.

“ I hope, Louisa, this kind of thing will not often occur ; I would prefer an ebullition of temper to this watery atmosphere. Retire now, dear, it is very late, and you are not looking so blooming as I could wish.”

How differently would Lord Elford have treated his young bride !—but it was agony to think ; and my heart was wholly and truly Thelwal’s.

I accompanied my husband to Richmond : he was pleased with my dress, and chatted agreeably as we drove along ; I was happy in the little sunny spots of his attention, and forgot every past vexation, while I saw him smile upon me. His kindness of manner during the drive even inclined me to try and overcome my distaste to Mrs. Major Smithe : he felt aware my character would not bear coercion, and gentleness was the better part to assume towards me. Mrs. Major Smithe received me with *empressement* ; her manners were not unlike those of Lady Anne O’Brien, but there was high-bred ease in Lady Anne’s way of saying and doing odd things which this lady did not possess : the more I saw of Mrs. Major Smithe the less I liked her. I found a small party assembled : the Turtons, Egertons, and ourselves, composed

the group, and dinner was announced almost immediately on our arrival. I had never been introduced to Mrs. Egerton before this meeting, though we had often met in large mixed parties. I was interested in her mild, suffering countenance: it was loveliness decaying in spite of youth, and her melancholy tones touched my heart: I was attracted towards her by a sympathy of feeling, for I was sure, by Captain Egerton's acidity of speech, she had much to endure as a wife. The captain himself was an everyday sort of looking person, half ungentleel, half *roué*. If a painter had drawn his portrait from description, sallow face, black curly hair and whiskers, large inexpressive eyes, and wide thin lips, the artist's brush must have mechanically struck off a speaking likeness of Captain Egerton. Captain Turton—for all my husband's acquaintance were military—was quiet, and gentlemanly, and sour-looking, but that made little impression upon Lady Emily, who fixed my attention by her lawless way of demanding notice. Lady Emily's showy dress, very *exposé* figure, and dauntless conversation, shocked my ideas of propriety. Lady Anne O'Brien veiled her failings to my sight, and fascinated me by her sprightly wit; Lady Emily dared everything, and loved to alarm. I turned always for relief to Mrs. Egerton.

I need not sully my pages or recal to my mind the wretched sentiments, the coarse unwomanly

remarks which seasoned the conversation after we retired from the dining-room. Lady Emily Turton and Mrs. Major Smithe accorded well together, but half their dialogue was lost to me ; I did not comprehend the slang in which it was clothed. My attention became absorbed in Mrs. Egerton, whose deep sighs and pale countenance attested her repugnance to the circle in which she revolved. I addressed her with my usual “ *insouciance*.”

“ My dear Mrs. Egerton, this is wretched amusement—do you endure it with the pain *I* feel on trying to tolerate all I hear and see ?”

Mrs. Egerton looked timidly at me, and shook her head, her eyes filled with tears, but she did not reply.

“ Surely,” I continued, “ Captain Thelwal cannot be aware of the real character of this Lady Emily : and Mrs. Major Smithe !—I cannot, and will not visit here again !”

“ We are both married,” replied Mrs. Egerton, with a look of meaning.

It was too true : Louisa Vansittart might object, but Mrs. Thelwal must repress her sentiments.

The entrance of the gentlemen at a very early hour was the signal for whist ; but while the card-table was preparing, Major Smithe seated himself by me.

“ My dear Mrs. Thelwal, you have honoured me beyond everything by your company, and you look,

I will not say how lovely, but you distance our women here."

"The women are obliged to you, sir," I replied tartly.

"I meant to say 'ladies;' we Irishmen are not refined in our expressions of courtesy—but we feel, Mrs. Thelwal."

A cunning expression in the major's eyes offended me. "I am glad to hear it, Major Smithe. I shall also feel obliged by your quitting me. I never allow familiarity, sir."

"My dear creature, I hardly touched you; how soon you fly at one!"

"Your dear creature! Good God! where is Thelwal?" I rose in desperation.

"Nonsense," replied the major in an under-tone, "do not involve your husband in this scrimmage; I am going to the card-table, but what an innocent it is!" So saying, the major walked quietly towards the gentlemen. I was thunderstruck. Mrs. Egerton had watched our short dialogue, and observed my indignation: she approached me. "Do not give way to your feelings now, be tranquil, or some disagreeable scene will take place.—I live in Castle-street, come to me to-morrow morning." She put her card into my hand, which she had drawn from her reticule. I promised to wait upon her, and endeavoured to calm my indignant spirit, but the major's insolent familiarity raised all my spirit, and

bore down even my fear of offending Thelwal. Nothing should induce me to re-enter the drawing-room of Mrs. Major Smithe. I declared my resolution to Mrs. Egerton.

“Do not be hasty in your determinations, Mrs. Thelwal: I regret my own situation, but how can we help ourselves?”

“I will never submit to this degradation!” I exclaimed with energy.

“See me to-morrow before you say a word to your husband.”

“I will if I can command myself, but I doubt that possibility.”

The gentlemen sat down to short whist, and it was two in the morning before they rose to return home. I was wearied to death waiting the close of their game; how Mrs. Egerton’s frail tenement could support such broken rest, I know not, but her spirit seemed preparing to depart; I never saw any human being so pale and corpse-like as she appeared, both in mind and body, long before we broke up. Thelwal rose gloomy and depressed, and allowed Major Smithe to lead me to the carriage. I was sure he had been betting deeply and was a loser, for his whole manner evinced annoyance and agitation. Major Smithe drew my hand within his arm, and held it with determined effrontery, as we descended the stairs, which I dared not notice, lest Thelwal should become exasperated and produce a scene of mischief: I made a

powerful struggle to release my hand, but I was silent till the major attempted, in the darkened hall to put his arm round my waist.—I could contain my anger no longer at this insult ; I turned quickly upon him, and boxed his ears with an alacrity and supernatural power that staggered him. The *soufflet* was distinctly heard by Thelwal, who followed us with the Egertons.

“ Take that,” I almost screamed, “ and touch me again at your peril !”

“ What the devil are you about now ?” said my husband, grasping my hand, and almost dragging me towards the carriage.

“ I will not bear this, Thelwal ; I will not be insulted by your friends and ill-used by yourself. Let me, let me go to my own home again !”

“ Nonsense, get into the carriage ; what’s all this folly for ? Can’t you repel a man who is perhaps a little winey without all this commotion ?—For shame !”

I was hurried into the carriage before I could utter a word to Mrs. Egerton, who kissed her hand to me, and placed her finger on her lips. It was no use counselling me to be silent, for the flood-gates of my speech were unloosed, and only Lady Langham’s presence could have stopped its fury.

I upbraided Thelwal with his conduct from the day of our marriage, as we drove homeward ; I accused him of coldness and want of affection—of abominable want of delicacy in resenting my indig-

nant repulse of that Irish fellow, the major, whose familiarity shocked my soul.—I told him my love, and dependence upon his affection, had led me to quit, ay, and break through every tie to become his wife, and was this the return of so much sacrifice, of such devoted love?—Anger and irritation of every kind gave rapidity and fluency to my speech, and I vowed to return to my own home rather than suffer the indignities I had borne that evening; nothing could recompense me for such endurance.

Thelwal knew now the character of my mind, and did not increase the evil by opposition. He replied only by caresses, which had still such an influence over me: I could not resist Thelwal's caress, particularly when I expected a violent contest. A few words of kindness did more than a world of harshness could have effected—it stilled my heart, and restored peace to my mind. I was easily persuaded his own roughness had proceeded from excitation, and I was quite ready to believe his affection was wholly my own, though he confessed he had not always a pleasing way of exhibiting its intensity. He took that opportunity to beg I would never irritate him by a harsh reception of Major Smithe.

“But why, my love! why am I to allow liberties from that odious major?”

“He did not intend liberties—you fancy these things, my dear.”

“Fancy? when a gentleman puts his arm round

my waist, I am then under the dominion of fancy !”

“ D—n the rascal ! Did he do so ?” and Thelwal’s eyes were lightened by a gleam of fire which terrified me, but it subsided quickly, and he sunk back in the carriage.

“ I see what the fellow is at ; but my mouth is stopped, and he knows it. I am in his debt !”

“ Pay him, Thelwal ; pay that man, and relieve me from him !”

“ I cannot. What with bettings, and these abominable card-meetings, and ill-luck, I am five thousand deep with him, a d—d rascal !”

How I trembled as I listened ! Five thousand pounds in debt to Major Smithe ! Could my fortune be truly the main object of my husband’s addresses—the cause of his coldness—his frequent and long absences ! I felt sickness come over me with newly-awakened apprehensions ; but to be indebted one shilling to the major galled my soul.

“ Sell everything, Thelwal ; put down the carriage, and let us retire into Wales ; but get rid of that man, I beseech you !”

“ My luck must change ; I shall soon have my revenge, and then I will quit England for a short time, and drop these fellows.”

“ But you may not be fortunate, and deeper losses—oh, Thelwal, consider, and let us fly now !”

“ I cannot ! You women tease so, when you take anything into your heads.”

“ Because we guard against future misery ; that is, I wish to do so ; and I will cheerfully relinquish anything, so you give me your affection, Thelwal.”

“ You harp so upon one point. I shall meet Smithe to-morrow, and have my revenge ; but I cannot stop where I am—‘ nothing dare, nothing have,’—besides I have promised to be with him at Turton’s. Turton is dipped as deeply as myself.”

“ So much the worse ; but, my dear Thelwal, listen to me, and be advised. Let us give up every expense, and go into Wales, Scotland, anywhere ; but do not live in this miserable state of uncertainty ; to-morrow, at this time, you may be without a resource ; do, my own Thelwal, be guided this once by me.” I took his hand, and stroked it fondly.

“ To-morrow, Louisa, perhaps ; but don’t urge me to anything now ; I am involved, and I must keep my promise. Don’t speak to me one word of exhortation, for I can’t bear it ; to-night will most likely decide my fate, and give me my revenge ; but, at any rate, I command your silence now.”

I was silent, as I was “commanded.” How heavily that word sounded on my heart, and how it would in other days have been resented, but all my feelings were concentrated in one deep imperious passion. I loved my husband !—my love absorbed every selfish and irritable thought : it blinded my vision to palpable misconduct on

Thelwal's part, and softened the frightful prospect of poverty. I fancied I could be happy with him in prison. Confinement, hunger, thirst, even hard labour I could endure uncomplainingly with Thelwal ; but if his heart was not mine, what were riches, and health, and luxuries ? Nothing, in my eyes ! I returned to Fladong's in sadness of spirit ; Thelwal, silent and equally unhappy, retired to seek forgetfulness in perturbed and feverish sleep. I never closed my eyes.

Our breakfast was taken in solemn silence. I felt exhausted with the fatigue of excited feelings and broken rest. My husband's heavy eyes and pallid complexion were the result of equal fatigue, and even more powerful emotions ; we both avoided the subject of the previous evening, and each took coffee as a stimulant to revive the drooping spirit for the calls of the day. It was two o'clock before our meal concluded, and then I ventured to ask Thelwal what engagements he had to fulfil before the hour of dressing arrived. He had none ; he should repose and read the papers till he dressed for Turton's. I told him of my engagement with Mrs. Egerton.

“ I shall not be very long in Castle-street, Thelwal ; so I shall see you for some time before you dress. I wish we were going to spend our evening together, my love ; but it is vain to hope for such a pleasure.”

Thelwal made no reply ; but I read a degree of

impatience in his manner which silenced all hints towards relinquishing the engagement. I ordered the carriage, and drove to Castle-street.

Mrs. Egerton was lying on her sofa, reading ; she rose, and smiled, at my approach ; but her eyes betrayed recent emotion, and her attenuated figure seemed struggling with disease. Her appearance overcame my fortitude ; I fancied our minds wrestling with equal alarm, and the suspense which kills all peace, and makes existence a living death. I did not attempt to conceal my tears ; I only waved her to be seated, and we both enjoyed for some moments the luxury of weeping freely, and in sympathy with each other. I was the first who could resume composure, for I had not endured Mrs. Egerton's lengthened sufferings, and I was eager to learn tidings of my husband's connexion with the major.

“ Mrs. Egerton, we are fellow-sufferers ; you weep the destruction of your married hopes, and I weep in fearful anticipation of what is to be my lot. Now conceal nothing from me ; but tell me who this horrible Major Smithe is, who exercises such influence over our husbands' minds.”

The subject was full of distress to poor Mrs. Egerton ; she hid her face with her hands, and the tears trickled through her long pale fingers. I waited in trembling anxiety for her reply—I anticipated every horrible communication. Mrs. Egerton recovered gradually from her grief, and

answered my question with almost hysterical nervousness.

“That man is a pest to society; he has wound himself round Egerton in some mysterious way, and his power is all potent—I cannot combat it. I have been years sorrowing over this wretched existence, this exciting, infamous, gambling business; but they will persevere.”

“Gambling business!” I exclaimed with horror; “who do you mean to include in a gambling business—not my husband, surely—not my husband, Mrs. Egerton?”

“We are alike miserable, Mrs. Thelwal, and it binds us in a fellowship of feeling, more strongly cemented than years of intimacy could effect. If you have friends—if you have a home yet open to you, fly to it, lest you waste, inch by inch, as I have done, and turn to death for release.”

“Is it so, Mrs. Egerton?—must I, the bride of a month, seek refuge from Thelwal—leave him I love so dearly, and return to the home from which I—.”

I could not pronounce the word “fled;” my lips felt glued; but I rose and bent towards her.

“Had I possessed a home,” continued Mrs. Egerton, “I should have been in its quiet bosom now; but I threw it from me when I gave my fortune and happiness into Egerton’s care—when I defied my friends and clandestinely married a man they despised and shunned. I will never more be a burden to them, but the grave will shelter me,

and this book teaches me to endure my punishment *here*, in humble hope it will end on this side the grave.

I reseated myself in despair. Here was a fair creature going before me in her career of sorrow, bearing the same errors, and already sinking under their effects. Was my fate to be like hers—and must I live to confess I had fallen to the lot of a heartless villain? I clasped my hands in mental prayer—the first my mind had ever breathed spontaneously—“ Oh, good Father! in mercy deliver me from this trial!” Mrs. Egerton saw my distress.

“ You may have a father—a mother to press you to her heart, though I have none. If you can say you possess such blessings, return to them, *I* could only beg my bread.”

“ But I have sinned, also, Mrs. Egerton,” I said, bursting into tears; I have quitted home—all—everything for Thelwal, and am *I* the victim of treachery and calculating art?”

“ Have you defied every living being, and scorned the gentle counsel of those who never spoke untruly?” asked Mrs. Egerton with energy.

“ I have done so.”

“ And did you give only credit to him of whom you knew nothing, save that he ministered to a hateful vanity, and counselled you to deceive the wise and the good?”

I could not speak.

“ If you have done all this, we are indeed friends in adversity, and, come, kneel by me and hear *my* advice.” Mrs. Egerton held out her hand, and I sunk on my knees at her side. She took up a prayer-book which laid on the table.

“ Here, my dear friend, is hope and promise for mourners, and without this companion there is no future for *us*. We are cut off from happiness and respectability in this world, but there is another to come, and let us not be obstinate in declining our heavenly Father’s counsel, as we rejected that of our earthly one.”

“ Oh, this is bitter—this is destroying !” I ejaculated.

“ I have lived five years in this bitterness, Mrs. Thelwal, and I am not yet destroyed ; it takes a long time to destroy in the slow process of grief—I am now resigned.”

“ But, tell me of Thelwal, Mrs. Egerton—tell me of my husband before my heart breaks ; what are his engagements with Major Smithe ? Speak out, —my life depends upon your words !”

“ Major Smithe and his three friends are linked in dishonour, but I firmly believe Captain Thelwal was long duped by the major. Egerton is a principal in transactions I dare not name : I *fear*, but I cannot prove the fact ; I only live in hourly horror of being consigned to jail, but to know I was

in a common jail is not so shocking to my feelings as being compelled to herd with Mrs. Smithe and Lady Emily."

I shuddered at the remembrance of Lady Emily, and I eagerly inquired her history.

She was the divorcée of Mr. Luttrell.

Who was Mrs. Smithe, and what part did she act in this fearful combination ?

Mrs. Smithe was only Mrs. Smithe *pour le moment*; she was not the major's wife; nor was it quite received as a fact that Lady Emily could claim the name of Turton.

"Such are the beings we are compelled to associate with, Mrs. Thelwal; and this indeed rouses me when I think of men submitting—compelling us to submit to degradation; this, indeed, makes every nerve in my frame tremble with disgust and indignation."

I rose from my knees in a fury.

"Mrs. Smithe a mistress! — the mistress of Major Smithe!"

"It is even so; but be tranquil, Mrs. Thelwal." Mrs. Egerton took my hand.

"Lady Emily a divorced wife—and mistress, too!" I screamed.

"My dear Mrs. Thelwal, do not be too much excited; remember, your hope of tranquillity is in concealing your feelings as I have done; do not give way to such excess of agitation."

I threw her hand from me. "If you can sit down in unholy society, I will not sully *my* reputation by such mean compliance with insolent demands—I am choking—"

I felt choking; my breath grew tight and short, and Mrs. Egerton waited till the hysterical feeling past away, and I resumed my senses. She then seated herself by me, and implored me to avoid any open quarrel with Thelwal. She represented to me the uselessness of widening a breach which must redound to my discredit and ridicule, since, like herself, I had married in defiance of obstacles, and was for ever dependent upon his kindness, or, at least politeness, for worldly consideration.

"None will pity us, Mrs. Thelwal; my fortune became Egerton's, and our clandestine union forbade the proper caution of a settlement being made; consequently, if my resentment drove me to extremities, where could I seek an asylum, and who would receive a woman deserted by her husband, and an alien to her friends—where would you seek rest from distress and want?"

"My mother would hold out her arms to me, I know she would," I exclaimed, hysterically; "and Mary would never say a reproachful word to her poor, ill-treated sister. Have I been the companion of depravity, and shameless, open sin—have I been, day after day, seated with women of tainted morals, with my husband's concurrence?—Shame, shame

upon him ! But I will bring the blood into his pale cheeks with my stinging reproaches ; I will cry out for help, and I know my mother will come to my voice.”

“ Once more, I entreat you, Mrs. Thelwal, to compose yourself, and do not allow your grief to overpower reason. Your gentleness may do much with Captain Thelwal to correct his errors ; your anger is, alas, bootless. Believe me, in truth and sincerity, anxious to do you all the service I can ever offer ; and I therefore beseech you to struggle with yourself, and do not irritate your husband. If your friends rally round you when you appeal to them, withdraw quietly under their protection, but avoid an open rupture, for your own sake. Are we not miserable together ? ”

Mrs. Egerton's recollections painfully oppressed her, for a deep suffusion coloured her face and temples, which were pale as marble before. Our mutual misery was great : it drew us at once into friendship never to be broken, and we stood clasped in each other's arms for some moments in speechless sorrow. Two wayward beings bent upon their own folly and seeking their own destruction now clung together in affliction, weeping obstinate and irreparable error. It was the very bitterest moment of my life.

I left Mrs. Egerton extremely unwell from the scene and conversation which had taken place ;

her health was too fragile to bear excitation, but she hailed every period of renewed exhaustion as steps which led her towards her long rest.

“I think I am hastened on some months,” she observed, “by this interview; but you, who still command health, pray to your friends to take you from this place—it is fatal to your repose. Do not shrink from pleading the extent of your errors, for everything is easier borne than this slow poison which consumes so gradually. A broken heart is the slowest of all deaths.”

I left her in tears, promising to bear her advice in mind, and, if possible, to be with her some part of every morning; but all my resolution failed me upon hearing, at my arrival at Fladong’s, that “Mrs. Major Smithe” was in the sitting-room, expecting my return. I walked up with the air and step of an offended queen, and entered the room a little unexpectedly, I suppose, for Mrs. Major Smithe was seated close to my husband on the sofa, and both were laughing preposterously at some information or joke which had been conveyed through the lady’s medium. I heard my husband say, as I opened the door, “Now, this is a good one—did Emily vouch for it?”

My presence discomposed the *tête-à-tête*, and sudden silence followed the burst of laughter which greeted my ears. I could not contain the angry feelings which crowded upon me at the sight of this

woman—all Mrs. Egerton's expostulations vanished. I walked up the room with agitated steps, and stood before my husband, but words died away on my lips ; I turned to " Mrs. Major," but I was equally silent ; I was full of eloquent and severe observations, but I could not speak them ; I stared at each with eyes striking fire, if I might judge by my own burning brain, but utterance was gone. I left the room with the same courtly, injured step, and banged the door after me.

CHAPTER IV.

I TOOK refuge in my own room, and threw myself on the floor. I cannot attempt a description of the feelings which almost maddened me when I reflected on the villany of Thelwal. I did not complain of coldness, harshness, or constant absence, *that* I had borne from the hour of my marriage, but I writhed under the insult of being associated with such companions as Mrs. Smithe and Lady Emily. My very soul loathed the degraded position to which I was reduced. What, become the intimate of the refuse of society, and move amid corruption at my own husband's request? Never, never, so help me Heaven!

How long I lay on the cold floor in darkness I know not, but I was startled by the sudden glare of a candle, and Thelwal stood before me dressed, and on the point of setting out to Captain Turton's dinner-party. I rose from my grovelling attitude.

"Is that woman gone, Captain Thelwal? has that woman left my drawing-room?"

“Who do you mean, Louisa?” asked my husband, somewhat embarrassed at my question, and turning the light from his face.

I snatched the candle from his hand, and lighted the tapers on my dressing-table. “Now,” I exclaimed, “we can see each other’s countenance, and you may read mine, for it can only announce contempt and horror. Now, Captain Thelwal, I ask you if Major Smithe’s mistress has departed?”

“Who has put such notions in your head, my dear; Mrs. Smithe has been gone some time, shocked at your unlady-like reception, and you have offended me deeply by your insolent deportment.”

“Did I not sufficiently unbend to the mistress of a notorious gambler, Thelwal?” I said, with the curled lip of indignant pride. “Did I not receive with proper courtesy the vile companion you have introduced to me.?”

My husband shrunk under my energy.

“I have tolerated unkindness of word and deed from you, because I deserved it when I spurned the counsel of my friends. When they urged me to choose the wheat from the tare, and I disdained their advice, I was bound to endure my punishment. I have endured it ever since we met at the altar, but from you alone will I receive the cup of repentance. I will not drink it at the hand of vice, whom I never offended. What have I done

to *her* that she fronts me at every turn? What crime have I committed that I must breathe the air of prostitution, and sit down with the castaway. Thelwal, I'll go home, for this I will not bear!"

Thelwal grasped my arm, and his eyes flashed fury; I thought he was going to strike me, and I shrunk from his touch in alarm.

"Hold your tongue, woman, if you would not incense me! Who told you that creature was Smithe's paramour—who told you Smithe was a gambler? Who has betrayed me to you, or dared to utter these things before you?"

"It little matters now, Thelwal, for truth must stand forth sooner or later. I never deceived you!—I never hid my temper from you, or tried to conceal its defects: but, having married you, I would have died before I had broken my vows, or deceived you as a wife!"

"You can say so to me now," returned Thelwal, "but you would have tricked Lord Elford."

That name raised a flame in my thoughts.

"Yes, I used you ill, Elford!" I exclaimed, shuddering, "I did use you very ill: kind, generous, excellent Elford; but you are revenged—oh! if you could see me now."

"Drop complaints, Mrs. Thelwal, which are of little use at this moment; it only destroys the tranquillity we might command, if you were rational."

“ Give up that major, my dear Thelwal, give up that woman, and renounce the Turtons, and I will follow you to the end of the world—give them up, Thelwal.”

“ I cannot ; I tell you I am bound to Smithe, past retreat, and your entreaties only irritate me.”

“ But *I* will never see them ; you do not mean to sell *me* for a gambling debt—you surely do not intend to barter your wife’s honour to that Smithe ?” •

“ Fiddlestick ! You need not fear Smithe ; you are so vastly squeamish when I am present to protect you.”

“ I will never meet them again—I will never see or be seen by those women. You may revel in sin, and the horrors of a gambler’s conscience, but I will go to my home !”

“ Where is your home ?” asked Thelwal, in that ironical strain which always exasperated me.

“ A thousand homes are open to me !—my mother’s house—the Hermitage—Grange—Brereton’s—all are open to a poor repentant sinner, and will be doubly open to shelter me from the contagion of vicious women.”

“ You are here with me,” replied my husband, “ and at your peril leave my protection ; your fortune is mine during your life, and the law cannot reach me yet ; you cannot plead for a separate maintenance ; I have not trespassed within its

boundary. I am master of your fortune, and not one shilling will I relinquish. I require it all—and more than all—unless I have luck this night. Shake hands, now, and wish me success.”

“ I will never see those women, Thelwal.”

“ Nonsense ! don’t be obstinate.”

“ I never will—so help me, God !”

“ You will receive my friends whenever I please, and you must check these violent *émeutes*, Mrs. Thelwal.”

I was almost beside myself—“ Thelwal,” I cried, “ what did you marry me for ?”

“ Your money !”

“ And was your love all affected to win me or my fortune ?”

“ To be sure ; you were desperately in love, and I was desperately in debt, so we married, or I would much rather have had the widow—now no bursting forth, Mrs. Thelwal, if you please ; you have asked me questions which I have answered honourably and truly ; you have declined receiving my friends, and I decline keeping terms with you. Your fortune is in safe keeping, and if you ever run away, the expense must not fall upon me.”

I made no reply—what reply could I make to such a speech ? I sat down, trembling in every limb.

“ And now, my dear, good night !” resumed Thelwal ; “ and as we completely comprehend

each other, the subject need not be renewed. If I have tolerable luck, you will be polite enough to congratulate me to-morrow—if not, you will be kind enough to avoid reproaches.” Captain Thelwal bowed to me, and quitted the room.

I sat riveted to the chair and spot for a long time after his departure—I had borne the heaviest shock a woman’s nature can receive—I had borne the communication of having given my love to a man who married me for my money—and I had borne the consciousness of having deserved the fate I contemplated bestowing upon Mr. Ellis and Lord Elford. Mr. Ellis had avenged himself, and its effects were taking place while he lay at rest. His bequest had made me wife to the man who wounded him deepest, and I was to suffer distress of mind from the hand of him who had caused me to err. This I understood, and I could have submitted to my deserved destiny, for I loved my husband with an affection which would have supported me through many trials; but this—this last insult, that a woman will not endure till her mind is depraved, drove me beyond the bounds of self-command. Am I to belong for ever to a society which bars me from the virtuous—am I to drag on an existence in the polluted atmosphere of such horrid vices as gambling and—let me breathe—I cannot live under such thoughts. I rang the bell in terror

—"Is Captain Thelwal's carriage returned from Cavendish-square?"

"It is, ma'am," replied the waiter, surprised at my manner.

"Let it be at the door in five minutes."

I was soon arranged for my purpose: I was speedily cloaked and prepared for my intended journey, and I entered my carriage with ten pounds in my purse, but not a single article of clothing or property beyond the habiliments for my flight: I left my husband in possession of everything—he should not say I went from him loaded with his effects—the money was my own—I did not search his desk to abstract a shilling—he was free to take all—I was too happy to surrender everything of mine so I freed myself from the vile society which threatened to destroy my intellects. I entered the carriage—"Drive to Hounslow, coachman, and put me down at an inn."

I felt relieved by putting down the glasses and breathing the night air. I was going home—home to my mother, and Lady Langham, and Mary. I should be happy again in their blessed society, and I knew their balms would not break my head: I felt revived as I got away from a city which had been to me the scene of so much wretchedness. I thought of Mrs. Egerton. She had no family to soothe her grief: she was destined to wear away

her health under hourly oppression and insult, while I was fleeing to kindness and sympathy. How much more fortunate was I in this particular, and how equally faulty had I been ! Again I prayed in spirit, and implored mercy from Him who alone can give peace. I felt soothed and comforted by the appeal ; I felt as though I should never again be completely miserable since prayer was open to me, and it was a communion between myself and my God—a friend and father who never deserted his seeking children. Mrs. Eger-ton had told me of its efficacy, and I needed some guiding star to point out the way of rest. The carriage stopped, and the coachman demanded further orders.

“ Are we at Hounslow ? ”

We were. The carriage-door opened, and three servants with lights were waiting my orders. I must proceed onwards ; I could not rest till I was in my mother’s arms. A postchaise was drawn out, and I gave Brown his last commands.

“ Return, Brown, to Fladong’s : when were you to take up your master ? ”

“ At three in the morning,” was his reply.

“ Then tell your master you have seen me safely to this place, and that you left me well.”

Brown bowed in silence, and saw me set off in my lonely post-chaise. I was returning in very different circumstances to the home I had so lately

quitted, but I was in search of peace : I heeded not the sickly glare of a style which had not power to embellish misery. I travelled all night without taking refreshment, urging the postboys to their best speed, and breathing deep sighs over the past. At last I entered Gloucestershire : the Malvern Hills so distinctly seen from many points of the road caused tears to flow ; I remembered the days of my engagement with Lord Elford, and the impetuous nature of my ambitious heart, which would not know when happiness courted my notice, and blinded itself to everything but passionate, wayward folly. How I gazed at those magnificent hills, and repented the past ! The distant steeple of H— became visible ; I drew nearer and nearer to its lovely scenery. The village was gained, and the chaise drew up to my home ; how my heart swelled with contending feelings !

The servant stared as he opened the door and saw my unexpected figure.

“ Never mind staring,” I exclaimed ; “ open the door and let me descend ; where is my mother, is she returned from the Grange ?”

“ My mistress is in, ma’am, and Mr. and Mrs. Brereton are with her.”

I rushed into the hall and on to the sitting-room : my mother was seated knitting as usual, and Charlotte was working by her side : Brereton was reading aloud. They gazed at me in silence, and

could not credit their astonished sight. I knelt at my mother's feet, and clasped her hand.

"Mother, receive your poor penitent child, and do not cast her from you!"

"I will, I do my child, most welcome—but where is *he*?" and my mother looked towards the door with alarm and annoyance.

"He is not with me, mother, and pray Heaven that I may never more see his deceitful face. I should lose my reason if I believed it possible he would ever seek me in this world again. Oh! mother, I am a poor broken-hearted sinner; but I sorrow for my past transgressions, and I see the folly and wickedness of my life. Save me, mother, save me from him!"

My mother took my cold hands in hers, and wept over me; my head sank upon her knees as she sat. Charlotte spoke not, but she knelt by me as fondly as she had done when I mourned the death of Dyneton. Henry Brereton stood up, the image of surprise and curiosity.

"My dear child, tell me what has happened—tell me what this is all about—I am bewildered"—and my mother placed her hands before her eyes. "Tell me what that wretch has done to drive you from him so soon!"

"Yes, mother, I will tell you: I do not fly from a man who has owned he never loved me, and who has never spoken kindly to me since I married

him in spite of my mother's disapprobation—I don't complain of that bitterness, because I insisted upon drinking my own cup, and I have swallowed it to the dregs ; but when I was forced to associate with the most depraved of my sex, scorned and insulted by him because I rose to vindicate myself from the horrid doom—then, mother, I told him my home would yet shelter me from degradation, for I vowed never to exist in infamy. I vowed I would never sit with the coarse, the dissolute, and the profligate, and I have flown back to you, to pray for forgiveness, and be at peace.”

“ And peace is here, my poor child,” said my mother, pressing me to her heart. “ Fear no one, for you shall never part from me.”

Charlotte was still silent, but her arms were wrapped round me : I felt their warm embraces, I heard their voices soothing and cheering me : how grateful to my poor lacerated heart, how blessed to my ear ! The long pent-up sources of grief may bear the strain for a season, but the reaction is dreadful. It seemed to me less painful to endure positive suffering, than the affectionate welcome of my friends. My heart felt bursting with new and powerful sensations ; the blood rushed to my head and brain, and I fell at my mother's feet dead to sound and sense.

They carried me to my room and placed me in bed, where I remained some weeks. During a

long and fearful delirium I was calling incessantly upon Thelwal to speak kindly to me, and reproaching him with harshness. Lady Langham came often to my bedside, but I invariably believed her to be Mrs. Smithe visiting me in malice and scorn : “ Get from my sight ! ” I would exclaim, what have I done to be tortured with your presence ? have you not intimates among your own lost creatures, but you must shock my sight and ears ! Begone ! for I tell you I have been vain and violent, but I am not such as you are. Go and repent, Mrs. Smithe, but leave my husband to myself ; he would never gamble and waste my hopes and happiness, if it were not for your arts. Go to Lady Emily Turton, and tell *her* so.”

My ravings soon told my history to those around me. I spoke of all that had occurred since I quitted H— as a bride—of Mrs. Egerton, her sorrows and prayers. Lady Emily’s name was recognised by Sir James Langham as the divorced wife of an excellent husband, and the companion of Captain Turton, whom he knew as an acquaintance of Thelwal’s. Mrs. Smithe was only guessed at ; but so strongly was I impressed with the idea of Lady Langham being actually Mrs. Smithe herself, that she dared not venture to enter my apartment after my first vehement expostulation. A brain fever was the consequence of my sufferings, and I was long recovering to any degree of strength. My

spirits were still longer regaining their tone, and never afterwards acquired their early brilliance: but I was wiser, and better, and more agreeable. The bloom of my complexion was gone, but my countenance wore a milder expression, and my manners were gentle, and my spirit more patient. I hoped now my period for feeling so keenly was ended: I had suffered two or three severe illnesses, brought on by my own want of control, and human nature must sink or become callous under constant conflict. Charlotte was as much with me as her own situation would allow; and Mary often stole from her "cell" to visit her "poor Louisa." As reason returned firmly to her throne, I enjoyed my sisters' society with an intensity beyond description. I could not without shuddering look back upon the time when I had repelled their affectionate attentions with coldness, and resented their gentle expostulations. How conscience goads the thoughtless, when once its dictates are received and obeyed! Mary could not long remain stationary at my bedside, for her husband required her constant care: I thought her pale and altered; but the doctor's increasing infirmities were inimical to a young wife's beauty. Charlotte made longer visits; and during the height of my disorder, her husband was content to remain at Bradford a whole fortnight alone. How could I repay all this undeserved kindness? At last my wandering thoughts fixed

themselves upon Lady Langham: I wondered I had not yet seen her; and as my mother watched by me one morning with Charlotte, I asked why Lady Langham had not paid me a visit during my long confinement. I was then told of the delusion under which I had laboured.

“Could I indeed mistake Lady Langham for such a woman as Mrs. Smithe? how strongly I must have been impressed with her horrible image! Oh! mother, if you could only guess the mad feelings which shook me when I learned the society I moved in was so infamous!”

“It was shocking; but it is over now, my love: you will not be subject to further vexation, and your future life will pass on, I hope, tranquilly and smoothly: do not let us revert to such disgusting topics.”

“I will try to forget them: when I gain strength these fearful recollections will pass away; but I do not wish to forget how my heart then clung to you all, and prayed for strength to bear my deserved trials. Charlotte, you, and Lady Langham, often bid me pray, and I did pray fervently in my trouble, and was helped in my need, for I had strength given me to fly to you. My dear mother, I am a sore trouble to you: I left you full of riches, and in the pride of vanity and evil; I have returned in poverty and humiliation.”

“And I hail your return under those very cir-

cumstances, my dear child : far better pleased am I to receive you in sorrow, which expands and purifies the heart, than to have known you were heedless and happy with a hardened spirit."

"All is for the best, my dear sister," softly whispered Charlotte, and her voice was balm to my mind,—“all is wisely ordered ; you are now with us for ever, and we shall not remember how we mourned for you : but you are not poor, my dear Louisa ; another friend has been raised up to you in Sir James Langham."

I heard with gratitude of the activity of that kind and best of men, which Charlotte detailed to me. Sir James had proceeded to town immediately on hearing the particulars of my return, and insisted upon an interview with Captain Thelwal. It was some time ere my husband was traced by him ; but Sir James never wearied in doing a kind action, and he would not leave town till he had achieved his object. He met Thelwal accidentally in the Strand : “Thelwal, you are the man I seek ; now take two turns with me on Waterloo Bridge.” Thelwal was surprised ; but Sir James took his arm and spoke in his usual good-humoured tone.

“Come, Thelwal, we know each other well, now tell me how you got linked with Smithe and Turton, and when you first became drawn in to gamble. My dear fellow, I would not have believed this six months ago, if you had sworn to it yourself.”

“I suppose my wife has held forth to you, Langham, since she left me to return to her puling home.”

“Not one word have I heard from Mrs. Thelwal; I have not seen her. The delirium of a long fever drew from her lips the thoughts which racked her mind and body, and as a re-union is impossible,—”

“A re-union!” exclaimed Thelwal. “I would rather live among wild cats, than be subject to her everlasting complaints again.”

“She believed herself aggrieved,” returned Sir James; “but since there exists no possibility of a reconciliation, I wish to ascertain the income Mrs. Thelwal may depend upon receiving.”

“She has left her legitimate home,” answered Thelwal, “and can claim nothing.”

“For your character’s sake, Thelwal, be generous and allow a certain sum to her who gave you all her income.”

“She is welcome to a hundred a-year.”

“Nonsense: you receive two thousand pounds yearly at her hands, and I must insist upon five hundred a-year being settled upon her, and paid quarterly.”

Thelwal hesitated. “If Susan Langham had married me, I should have been a different man, James: her refusal laid the foundation of all my troubles, and has made me careless and indifferent

to all other women. If she had married me, I should never have known the tigers who now prey upon me, or have been tied to a woman whose vanity would have played me some such trick as she played Elford. Mrs. Thelwal is cold, vain, and arrogant : Elford might be taken in by her—I never was. Her accession of fortune was a strong temptation : I could not resist it. Well, five hundred let it be, and I hope I may never meet her again in this life !” The compact was signed and sealed at Sir James Langham’s hotel ; and then Sir James gave his sentiments at large.

“ Thelwal, our acquaintance ends here : my wife will not receive you at the Hermitage or elsewhere, after treating her friend in the manner you have done, and to which I need not allude.”

“ So you are hen-pecked, Langham.”

“ That expression has no ridicule for me. While my wife acts uprightly, and with dignity, she has my full concurrence in all her actions ; and in the delicate opinions, which are the grace of woman, her wishes are my rule. I am proud of being hen-pecked by a woman so highly-gifted as Lady Langham.”

“ She is a treasure, I know ; and just the woman for you, Langham. But my own anxiety will be to keep out of Mrs. Thelwal’s society. I never had a moment’s pleasure in her presence, married or single.”

“ And so fine a creature, Thelwal ; and really with many good qualities !”

“ Half the women one meets with are fine creatures ; and a devil’s life we lead with them. Mrs. Thelwal always put me in mind of a brightly-streaked tiger-cat, ready to fly at you if you crossed her path. Where is your cousin, Langham ?”

“ I shall not tell you, Thelwal. Susan Fortescue is not for you ; and you have no right to persecute her. Remember you are now married.”

“ I feel the galling chain without being reminded of its weight. But Susan Fortescue does not fear me. Is she in England ?”

“ She is not on this side of the channel. I have nothing now to prevent my returning home, and I shall set off by the first coach. Thelwal, be a man, and break from the trammels which coerce you. If I am hen-pecked under my wife’s excellent and gentle administration, what are you considered to be ? I can understand the influence of a kind woman, but the domineering sneers of men, combined to ruin and laugh at you, requires a new name. I confess I would much rather be pecked by a hen than a parcel of game-cocks.”

“ I shall be coerced by no one. I have intended some time to return to the continent, and I shall now be off. I think you said Mrs. Fortescue was at Paris ?”

“ Did I ? I said what I cannot prove, then ; our

last letter from Susan talked of Florence ; but she is uncertain in her movements."

The two friends parted with a show of regret, but each must have been glad to separate. Sir James Langham must have shaken off with little repugnance a friend whose character he could now only condemn, and Thelwal must have shrunk under the piercing, yet gentle eye of his honourable companion. They must have parted without pain on either side.

I was now, in point of fact, a widow ; for my husband openly declared his resolution of seeing me no more. This communication had nearly brought on relapse from the exquisite pain it caused me. I loved him still — truly and fondly loved him ; and though the income secured to me relieved me from the fears of being burdensome to my family, it could not soothe the misery of knowing how completely my vanity had duped me in every incident of my life. It could not soothe me in feeling for ever separated from my husband, and knowing his acknowledged affection for Mrs. Fortescue ; yet this was all in wisdom, for it lessened my self-dependence and cruelly humbled my besetting sin. I was deeply sunk in vanity, and vanity is vexation of spirit ; it required, indeed, such deep probings to extract the canker from my heart.

My interview with Lady Langham was affecting to herself, and painful to those who witnessed it.

Charlotte had returned to Bradford, and my mother and Mary alone remained to assist each other in their different cares. They were both with me when I first received Lady Langham. The sight of her gentle form, the kindness of her husband, conjured up a thousand emotions and recollections. I could only hold out my hand for some moments,—speech was out of the question. When utterance returned, I humbly implored her forgiveness for the past, and her prayers for my future peace.

“Had I borne in mind half your excellent counsels, my own true friend, this state had not fallen upon me; had I taken your early admonitions and looked into myself, I might have been respectable and happy, but now I shall be a proverb to the sinning ones. Twice I have flown from my home—once as a runaway daughter, and once as a runaway wife. My history will be held up as a warning to young women who stand justified to themselves in their obstinacy, and I must be quoted as a proof of the evil-doer being foiled by her own misdeeds; but surely I have suffered a deep punishment, Lady Langham, for I have been in unholy places, and I have been forced to mix with the dissolute and wicked!”

“Do not talk so, my dear Louisa,” replied Lady Langham, distressed by my appeal, “let us speak only of pleasure in receiving you among us,

and adore the hand which deals this blow in mercy."

"I have prayed, Lady Langham; I could not endure what I have endured, if prayer had not supported me. Mrs. Egerton and myself prayed together when there was none to help us, but she had no friends to care for her; I knew mine would receive me when I came humbly to beseech their pardon. Your husband has done me a great kindness, Lady Langham, but tell him I can never speak to him on the subject. I feel it *here*."

"Say not a word, my dear Mrs. Thelwal; my husband has only done what any friend would do by a female whose relations were absent."

My thoughts never ranged long from Thelwal. Lady Langham had pronounced my name, and it brought his image before me in the days of our pleasant walks from Hartley stile, when I believed him my lover, and trifled with my own happiness. I saw him before me courteous and adoring as he was at that time, mild, winning, and obsequious, and I wept at the change which had taken place. My friends soothed my grief, and gave me their sympathy; it was all they could offer to one situated as I was at that moment, and though such sympathy could not heal the wounds of my heart, it fell like rain on the parched earth.

"If he was but here to vex and distress me as

in time past, before I discovered his worthlessness, I could better bear it ; but to know he really loved another, to know he hated my character, and married me for the mere purpose of enjoying my fortune—oh ! it is very bitter. Tell me, Lady Langham, truly, did you know of his love for Mrs. Fortescue ?”

“ I had heard of his proposal to her in younger days, but though I never had the high opinion of Captain Thelwal which you entertained, I did not conceive him to be so very—”

“ Ah ! Lady Langham, spare me that word ; he is my husband in spite of my deserted situation, and Heaven knows I love him now too devotedly for my poor heart ever to feel at rest ; my punishment, Lady Langham, is only perfect through my weakness. Had I cared less for Thelwal, I should not be racked by the pain I caused so wantonly to Mr. Ellis and Lord Elford ; now I comprehend the full extent of my crime in trifling with their feelings, and now I bitterly repent the headstrong wildness of my career. I only pray Heaven, Lord Elford may despise me too deeply to remember me with interest. Poor Mr. Ellis I can trouble no more, but I would give worlds to forget his image, and lose the recollection of my heartless conduct, but it will follow me to the grave. I see him constantly before me in my dreams now, looking so ill and unhappy, and Thelwal points at him in

derision, and I wake in alarm and fever; I should recover if I could cease to endure such terrible dreams."

My mother proposed my removing to Bradford when I was sufficiently strong to make the exertion. I declined all thoughts of change of place.

"No, mother, let me remain with you; I have given you long and constant anxiety, now I will try to make amends for my past errors as far as I can see my way. I must have constant remorse for some time weighing on my mind, but I have sought it, and earned it; under your roof and protection I shall be happy in time, happier than I can ever now be elsewhere. No, mother, I will not quit you."

I became convalescent, and I did not quit my mother: I never appeared in society, or moved beyond the Hermitage, the Grange, and Bradford, except with my mother: her presence was necessary to my repose. Our morning's occupation resumed its stillness, and ended always with a walk to the Grange. I felt the blessing of a sister's love and society in my own eclipsed state, and the visit which was formerly paid with wearied and dissatisfied spirit, was become the bright spot in my day's routine. How quickly do events change our tastes and feelings!

Dr. Drinkwater remained *in statu quo*, in his gouty propensities, but his temper was becoming

acidulated, as he gradually felt assured his system would never recover its healthy tone. The doctor forgot Providence had mercifully given him a matchless wife to soothe his pains, and balance the disagreeable knowledge of his crippled state; he forgot, as men ever do forget, that this life was not made for him, and that selfish expectations must meet continual disappointment. The doctor only clearly understood that he was gouty, and most likely a cripple for the remainder of his existence; and his mind grew gloomy under this expanding idea. Mary's cheerful compliance with all his wishes, and her undeviating sweetness of disposition, added to his disorder, for it increased his selfishness: the friction of a little opposition would have met the case with better effect, and compelled him to exertion, both in mind and body; but Mary never considered herself in any circumstance; her winning attention to her husband was beautiful to witness, but it was gathering up clouds which would some day burst over her. I could not help thinking men were like curs, that bark and bite at the timid, but cower under the eye of defiance.

The doctor and Jenkins began to have serious disagreements; I know not which was in fault, but it was optional with Jenkins to remain or depart, and he expressed his mind to me as I watched him transplanting shrubs.

"If you please, ma'am, however, I can't stay much longer with my master—he swears so!"

"Swears, Jenkins! I never heard your master utter an oath in my life."

"Perhaps not, ma'am; but, however, my mistress knows better than that, ma'am, and we in the kitchen gets sworn at till our eyes strike fire. I can't bear it no longer, however, and we are all meaning to give warning very soon. I am sorry for my mistress, ma'am, or we should have gone long ago."

I never conversed with domestics, or listened to complaints of their employers, therefore, I returned no answer to Jenkins's remark, but I pondered over its matter. I feared Mary had much to encounter in her husband's temper; and, perhaps, by my mother's never-failing visits, she also suspected the true state of the case. Who would have thought quiet Dr. Drinkwater swore like any trooper! Who would have believed our report, or given credit to our assertion, that the poor, dear, mild doctor could foam with anger, and that gout made him "cream and mantle like a standing pool?" I had sinned against all propriety, and my luckless matrimony was my own seeking and desert, but why was Mary so punished? Hers was even a worse destiny. My sex, who severely condemn the wife in leaving her protector under almost any

other circumstances, would rally round *me*, to cheer me on in resenting the insults I had fled to escape ; all would commend the spirit which could not stoop to consort with the vile ; but Mary's cheerless path must be trod in silence : her forbearance, her burden must be invisible to the public eye. All would notice her altered form, but none would guess its cause, for the surface of the Grange establishment displayed no breakers to denote the rock a-head. All was apparently calm during the doctor's bachelor existence, and any disturbance would draw down remark upon the wife who had deranged its tranquillity. Poor Mary must, therefore, be alone in her discomfiture.

Jenkins's threat was not meant to die in his expression of it. I was seated at the Grange with the doctor one luckless morning when the long-deferred warning took place : I was reading the " Pilgrim's Progress" for the first time, and the doctor was busy with sundry bills and accounts, which never added to the "*dolce contento*" of his spirit on Monday mornings, when Jenkins entered.

" However, sir, if you please, I am come to give warning."

" You be d—d for a fool !" replied the doctor, in accents that petrified me.

" However, sir, I am going for all that, if you please ; and I hope, sir, you'll suit yourself as soon as convenient."

“ Go and worry your mistress, you fool you, don’t plague me.”

“ However, sir, I don’t wish to plague my mistress, and the cook and housemaid wish to give warning, sir, if you please, and the housekeeper has spoken to my mistress long ago, sir.”

“ All of you get out of my sight for d—d devils, and go to h—ll !” roared the doctor.

Jenkins stood firm, and the doctor quailed, as he generally did after a hurricane. I left the room : I did not wish to witness such a scene, but I heard Jenkins holding on in a grinding, unvarying tone, and the doctor’s silence proceeded from want of ammunition : he was overpowered with visions of the coming evil. I flew to Mary in her store-room, where she was displaying her newly-arranged shelves and comforts to my mother, and gave her the heads of the discourse passing in the “ cell.” Mary hastened to divert the storm, and we followed her. Jenkins was still grinding away, and completing his dying speech, but the doctor was not equal to express his resentment : the gout had seized him in both hands, and he felt struck from head to foot. Mary was alarmed : the doctor was evidently ill and struggling for speech ; at last his indignation expended itself.

“ Go to the devil, and let me see you no more, you cursed fool, and take the women with you : you’ve given me another attack with your long rigmarole.”

“Leave the room now, Jenkins,” said Mary, calmly, “and send in the gardener and coachman.”

Jenkins quitted the apartment; and when the object of wrath had withdrawn, the doctor’s irritation gradually subsided: a trembling fit succeeded, which was even more alarming to witness, and I was relieved by the entrance of the two servants, who conveyed him to his bed perfectly unable to assist himself, or utter a connected sentence. Here was another vexation for poor Mary, but her placid temper met all its evils unruffled. The gardener was despatched for little Mr. Linton, the apothecary, and Jenkins was kept out of sight. We remained with Mary for some days, to assist her in her multiplied departments.

Jenkins was firm in his determination to depart, and his master’s illness made no change in his resolutions: he told his mistress, “It must come to this sooner or later, however; and when his master was ill he was worse than before, which he could not endure.” He told me privately, they could none of them bear to see their mistress so unkindly spoken to, and if she was not so gentle, his master would not give way to such passions; it was impossible to stay with such a gentleman, but he would remain while he could be of use to his lady, for she was^f always kind.

The doctor presented a sad spectacle to Mr. Linton, who, from long habit, had a presentiment of

the truth : he asked no questions, but he heard the doctor's fragments.

" I'm ill again, Linton—those what's-his-names bother me."

" Indeed, sir," said Mr. Linton, soothingly.

" I can't be quiet if I would, Linton—always some d—d thing abey to provoke one."

" I will send you a composing draught, sir, that will cause quiet sleep."

" I can't sleep, Linton—don't send me messes—where's what's-his-name ?"

" Below, I think, sir."

" Never mind—I want nothing but quiet—don't send me your d—d yellow stuff."

Mr. Linton gently fell into a little news : Captain Bates was very ill—seriously ill : he was drooping fast, and did not seem to take any care of himself. Mrs. Jones was better than she had been some time past. The baker had met a severe accident and almost crushed his thumb.

The doctor was soothed by these village occurrences, and grew much more calm under Mr. Linton's management ; before he left his bedside the doctor had fallen into a gentle doze.

I had a conversation with Jenkins before I slept. I knew his quitting the Grange would provoke remark, and I was resolved to spare Mary unnecessary and undeserved blame ; I therefore charged him to state openly his reason for leaving his situa-

tion, and do his mistress justice. Jenkins's reply surprised me.

"However, miss, everybody guesses what's going on: it was bad enough before, and that was pretty well known to people of all description except your family: but it's ten times worse since my young mistress came. She is too gentle, miss—gouty gentlemen shouldn't have too much their own way."

It was, then, no secret to any one but ourselves that Dr. Drinkwater's temper was composed of fiery particles, and yet he had been for years our constant visiter. How was that?—doubtless our intimacy gave rise to suspicions which deterred any friend from mentioning those delicate particulars; and in the very confidence of long acquaintance, Mary had married a man to whom she was as utter a stranger as I could be in hastily wedding Thelwal. Lady Langham's lottery produced a prize; but her acuteness had reasoned upon actions before she loved—mine succumbed to the desire of creating admiration—poor Mary's was a blank which defied all reason, for her friends had proved no objection but ill-health against the man of her choice.

I mentioned all these things to my mother when we were alone. She had discovered the peccant part in her son-in-law, very soon after the marriage had taken place; but she had never hinted her discovery to Mary, whose affection for her hus-

band would blind her to much of its bitterness. She believed the doctor to be extremely violent at times, but Mary had never yet been the object of his anger, and her influence might never be disturbed.

“Was not Charles aware of his irritability?” I asked.

“Not to any degree; but Charles was so little at home, and he rarely saw the doctor except at our house. The doctor never saw company at home, and Charles was with his regiment.”

“Then have the kindness, mother, to tell me how we poor women are to come at a knowledge of these things. We marry, and are wretched; yet some marry with everything in their favour, and are more unfortunate than such wild, obstinate things as myself. Mary is more to be pitied than myself, for she had substantial reasons for giving herself away,—I had none.”

“Human nature is deceitful,” replied my mother.

“Human nature is bad, but it is only man who is deceitful.—” I stopped—what was I in my conduct towards Lord Elford? My mother looked at me: I coloured deeply. “Forgive me, dearest mother; I am sensible when I have erred, and condemn myself most justly: none have been so treacherous as myself, or done more of evil; but I am praying to be made more holy, and I will never

more throw stones at a fellow-mortal : forget what I have said."

"I cannot do that," replied my mother in her gentlest accents. "I cannot wish to forget that which proves to me my daughter's graceful humility in checking uncharitable thoughts. My dear Louisa, it is a consolation most blessed to a parent's heart to watch the chastised spirit in its better feelings ; and if you knew my happiness in perceiving your regret at having uttered a thoughtless observation, you would not wish me to forget."

CHAPTER V.

OF course my return home furnished endless conversation in the neighbourhood ; but I saw few acquaintance, and its gaiety had totally subsided. The Mortons had sunk into their old quiet habits, and Mr. Charles Morton disappeared immediately after my rejection. The fountain of social meetings, the Hermitage, no longer kept up a movement among the families, or drew distant visitors to its hospitable hall. All had expired with my marriage, and the four guests who had once borne so much sway in our little circle of intimates, would never more revisit the quiet scenes of H—. What a change had been effected ! what extraordinary incidents had occurred since our return from Bath ! How many had appeared upon the scene, and how few were disposed of happily, save only Lady Langham and Charlotte, in the few months which had elapsed. Captain Bates, in the autumn of his

days, was doomed to suffer as acutely as the youngest of the group ; but when are we secure from evil ? and what age releases mortality from its bonds, till death stills the pulses, and all is ended ? Mrs. Fortescue's gay address and lively conversation had amused Captain Bates till he loved as fervently as seventy years of age could love ; and even if the admiration he felt might not bear that designation, still his mind was filled by her image, and he had flattered himself her attentions spoke interest, and might possibly extend to a friendship and union which would gild his days with long-resigned happiness, and extort from him a confession of his hollow theory : but it was not to be so with Captain Bates : he had been again thrown back upon himself, and his daughter's society offered no consolation to his disappointed feelings : he felt daily and hourly the deprivation of Mrs. Fortescue's gay remarks, and agreeable vivacity. Her beauty, her easy manner, and somewhat too kindly offered attention, had drawn him into society and enlivened the dull visions of his home, and its withdrawal had plunged him into tenfold sadness and gloom. Captain Bates visibly declined, and Mr. Linton's shake of the head, the apothecary's prophetic foreboding of evil whenever he was spoken to on the subject, made me inclined to fear a serious and speedy termination to poor Captain Bates's malady. I determined to pay a visit to our old friend : he had declined seeing any

of the neighbourhood, who were eager in offering attentions, and he had reported himself too unwell even to see my mother, but I felt certain he would receive me. I was not the selfish being of former days. I had suffered, and could now feel for those who tasted affliction and endeavour to soothe its pangs. Captain Bates and myself had been together in our folly, and sympathy must exist between us in our mutual wrongs. I was sure my voice would find its way to his heart, and my presence would rouse his attention. I called the day after Mr. Linton's attendance upon the doctor, and would not be denied admittance, though the servant was pertinacious in asserting his master was too ill to receive company. Poor captain! how *he* was changed in a few weeks! I should not have recognized him in an accidental meeting, and I was some moments recovering my composure. He was seated in an arm-chair close to the fire, his once remarkably upright figure bent down like a withered branch, and his eyes heavy and half-closed. I sat down by him after bowing to Miss Bates, who was seated feeding her canary, and gently asked how he felt in health. He did not express any pleasure or annoyance at the interruption: his eyes remained half-closed, but he answered me—

“Quite well, thank you.”

“Lord, father! you are no such thing,” exclaimed Miss Bates.

“What, Polly?”

“What puts such things in your head, father? Mrs. Thelwal knows you are very ill.”

“Mrs. Thelwal! eh!—that was poor Miss Louisa,—well, what of her?”

“She is seated by you, father,” called out Miss Bates, in a loud tone.

“Ah, indeed! Very glad to see you!” And Captain Bates *was* roused, for he raised his head, and gazed upon me, and he put forth his hand and pressed mine with much feeling.

“I am come to see you, Captain Bates, and hear how you are; Mr. Linton told us you were not very well.”

“No, my dear, I am not what I was; but no one is well or happy in this world. You are looking as well as ever, though. How is Mrs. Vansittart?”

“All quite well, thank you; but I am come to sit some time with you, and I will tell you how everybody does.”

“Well, do so; I never hear anything.”

I began cautiously, speaking of the Drinkwaters and Langhams, which seemed to amuse Captain Bates, and he asked several questions, with interest. At last, I spoke of the weather.

“It is fine weather, too, Captain Bates; but not so pleasant as I hope it will be next summer, when you and I will walk together again.”

“ Ay, ma’am, we made a bad business of that walking. I shall not walk any more.”

“ Yes, Captain Bates, we shall both walk together, in the summer, and talk over the past.”

He shook his head. “ And what has passed that we shall care to remember ?”

It was a question which came home to my own feelings, and produced a burst of tears. Captain Bates saw the agitation, and it roused him more than anything had yet done. He took my hand kindly, and resumed, with something of his former tone and manner—

“ No, no ; we will not talk of the past, but the future ; and try to bear up against all these things. No one spends their life happily, and why were *we* to be set apart from the rest of mankind ? That widow was reckless in her conduct, and I was a fool ; so nothing need be said about that. She made me very happy and very silly, and very ill now, for I think I miss her good-humoured chat every hour. Sometimes I fancy her talking to me, and it wakes me up ; but I find it only Polly preaching to her bird.”

The widow’s remembrance, however, was sufficient to draw Captain Bates’s mind from utter stagnation, and having once begun the subject, he talked with interest and some degree of energy. I listened and replied to all his peculiar ways of thinking, and I was certain he might yet be roused to health if

he was amused and soothed by occasional visits, and the voice of his old friends. I told him I should pay a daily visit, and chat with him for an hour or two. His eye brightened, and he shook hands with me cordially.

“Do so: it will be a great pleasure. I see and hear no one.”

“I’m sure my father is not fit to see any one that figure,” observed Miss Bates, as I rose to take leave. “He hates being seen, and I am quite as annoyed by people coming when we are busy as we can be.”

“Invalids, Miss Bates, sometimes require a little society to be introduced by stealth, as we give children medicine in their cakes. Your father is better already.”

“He will not be so long,” replied the fair Bates. “He will sink again.”

I left the house disgusted with Miss Bates’s unfeeling manner, till reflection whispered, she had less to be blamed for than myself. She was acting to the best of her stupid knowledge in closing society from her father. His naturally reserved habits led him to shun company as his mind became depressed, and her own wishes went with him in preferring a solitary *tête-à-tête*. She was, therefore, violating no principle; her ignorance and dulness alone were to be deplored, but my own conduct possessed no such redeeming excuses. I was not dull, I was not ignorant, and I had done a

thousand things with the knowledge—often with the intention—of giving pain. That was not the case with Miss Bates; she was infinitely more worthy than I had ever been. Such were my uncomfortable reflections as I passed on to the Grange.

The doctor was laid up in ordinary; his mind had originated a complete fit of gout, and Charlotte's preparation for receiving a little stranger into the world, at Bradford, could not exceed Mary's quiet movements at the Grange. The "gout basket" was drawn from one of the dark closets, and its contents spread to air before the "cell" fire; flannels, lamb's-wool shoes, great dressing-gown, and sundry mysterious articles lay in most admired disorder on the floor, while Mary silently and gravely reconnoitred the whole concern, to assure herself all was in order to do battle. She had previously gone through a little scene with her husband which had distressed her greatly—since it exposed the extreme indolence of his mind, and his perfect inability to exert himself.

"Mary, my dear, I hate the idea of that d—n fellow leaving me."

"What would you do, dear Gideon, with a servant who has given you warning?"

"Oh! Why raise his wages, and tell him he can't go."

"That is a sad example; surely we can meet

with a servant who will supply his place in time."

"I cannot part with him, Mary ; Jenkins is a d—d fool, but I am used to him, and he knows all my ways ; I could not swear comfortably to a stranger."

"My dear love, why should you swear at all ? It never lessens your pain, and servants will not hear that violent language very long—don't swear so, Drinkwater."

"I can't help it ; I never swear at you, Mary."

"My dear, you would frighten me to death if you did ; but I feel extremely distressed at even hearing you speak so to poor Jenkins—do you consider it necessary to swear ?"

"I can't get on without—it's my gout, I believe ; but I can't part with Jenkins, Mary ; I am so used to him and his cursed way of doing everything wrong, that it preys upon my mind to think he has given warning."

"I will speak to Jenkins, my dear ; therefore do not worry your mind any more about it."

"I shan't sleep till it is all settled, Mary."

Jenkins was summoned to an audience by my sister, most unwillingly on her part.

"Jenkins, your master does not wish to part with you, and I am sorry you think of leaving us at this time."

"However, ma'am," said Jenkins, bowing res-

pectfully, "I am sorry to disturb you; and, as it has made master so ill, I will not say any more about it. I like master, ma'am, but he swears so rampageously, it upsets me and the maids, I assure you, ma'am."

"Your master is very gouty, and that makes him irritable, Jenkins."

"If so be he would not curse so dreadfully, I don't wish to give trouble, ma'am; so, if you please, I'll say no more about it just at present. Master may leave it off, you know, ma'am, and I have lived many years with him."

"Very well, Jenkins."

That point was settled, as Jenkins said, "for the present," and the doctor's mind was at rest; but sleep would not come at his bidding: for days and nights he rolled restlessly on his thorny couch, and Mr. Linton's composing draughts were as innocent in their effect as vials of pure water. Mary had much to endure. It could not be concealed from our observation, that her patience was severely tried, and our present residence with the Drinkwaters drew the veil back which sheltered the doctor's temper from our view. He did not swear at his gentle wife, but he was impatient and harsh: nothing satisfied him, nothing was properly done: Mary was required to be in half a dozen places at once, and she was never allowed to feel fatigued, or resign her post for an instant. Jenkins was

perfectly right when he said, "Gouty gentlemen should not have too much their own way;" for Mary's anxiety to please certainly made the doctor selfish. My mother undertook the household department, and I did wonders in sewing on the tapes and buttons which the doctor's irritable temper burst and tore from his different concerns—therefore Mary was, in some degree, assisted, but fatigue of body was trifling compared with the grievance of the mind. Mary was often in tears, and sighs would sometimes burst from her overcharged heart, which affected my mother's spirits, and depressed my own more deeply. We spent a melancholy Christmas: our intercourse with the Hermitage was suspended, for the Langhams spent that season in Bath, and the doctor's protracted illness kept Mary and ourselves in perpetual employment, which confined us almost exclusively to the Grange. The disorder threatened to make the stomach its seat of war; and Mr. Linton's skill was called forth to grapple with the disease. He had now two patients upon his hands, equally requiring his time and attention. Captain Bates was sinking rapidly, and could not be expected to struggle against a sudden—a quick decay. I visited him whenever the weather admitted of my walk, and from my first call and promise to make a daily appearance, he looked eagerly for its fulfilment. I had a sensible pleasure in seeing his

spirit rally, as I chatted beside his arm-chair, and talked of our former meetings and walks. I was connected in his mind with all that had occurred, and with me he could speak of "the widow," as he always termed her, without reservation: he was restless when rain or wind interfered with this amusement, and, for some time, I had persevered, in spite of weather, to dedicate an hour daily to Captain Bates.

One morning he was particularly inclined to speak of past occurrences, and told me all he had endured since Mrs. Fortescue's departure. "Polly," he said, "had never been much of a talker, and the widow was so lively and smiling, it had seemed to give him a new lease of existence, to hear her winning voice and musical laugh. He had not fancied she could care about him; but he cared for her as a creature who gave him the only excitation he had received for years, and her sudden disappearance from Malvern had given him a shock which was the more deeply felt, as he suffered in secret and silence. He never asked questions, or desired to know concealed things; but that mysterious affair had given him much pain, and cut him off from all the pleasure he had anticipated in that Malvern expedition: ever since that moment, he had been plunged in dulness, and it was very good of me to come and see him as I had done."

Poor Captain Bates! while he was bearing his

burden silently, I had been preparing my own, and that made me so selfishly blind to his feelings. I had often observed his gloom of manner, and his resumed taciturnity, but my mind was given to my own affairs, and I never heeded the woes of others where my own pleasures were concerned.

While Captain Bates was speaking, I looked with astonishment at the change which had taken place in his appearance; I could scarcely believe I was addressing the same person who, but a few months previous, had been remarkable for his upright, firm figure, and his talent for joyous sociability: he was now drooping, emaciated, and silent, except during the hour of my visit, and even that event had not caused more than a partial gleam to illuminate his countenance. Miss Bates told me her father resumed his listless attitude the instant the parlour-door closed upon me. I left him this day particularly cheerful, for we had spoken much of Mrs. Fortescue, and recurred to many recent events which interested his attention. When I rose to depart, he held my hand some moments.

“This is very kind. You will come again to-morrow, Mrs. Thelwal?”

“I will be with you every morning, Captain Bates.”

“Do so: it does me good to see you. Polly never holds forth; therefore I hear no voice but yours. Don’t run away as the widow did.”

“ I promise to be as regular as clock-work ; adieu ! ”

“ I want to escort you to the door, Mrs. Thelwal, but I feel glued down to my chair ; I am suddenly very feeble. ”

“ The spring will strengthen you ; don’t attempt to move—farewell ! ”

Captain Bates made an effort to rise, and stood upon his feet for an instant, but he re-seated himself, unable to advance them. I kissed my hand to him, and Miss Bates accompanied me to the passage-door.

“ Your father is more cheerful to-day, Miss Bates. ”

“ He is more alive than I have seen him for some days. ”

“ If a few friends,” I said, “ could steal in occasionally, it would do him good and rouse him. ”

“ Oh, no ! he hates people coming in suddenly, and so do I ; he does very well in his arm-chair. ”

It was useless contending the matter, but I urged once more the benefit of change of scene upon his attention, if he only saw *one* fresh face every day.

“ My father saw plenty of fresh faces at Malvern, and he has never been well since ; that journey, I think, did more harm than good. ”

I bowed, and departed.

My days now passed in walking from one invalid to another, and, strange to say, I found the em-

ployment both healthy and tranquillizing. Called away from dwelling too closely upon my own sorrow, and humbled into commiseration for others, the constant movement, and the interest I felt in poor Captain Bates, benefited my mind. I did not feel my thoughts engrossed by selfish considerations ; my matrimonial misery had opened my eyes to the wicked folly I had committed in giving way to vanity and wretched ambition ; and my anxiety was to deserve and ensure repose, by sacrificing their remains to penitence and prayer. My most pleasing moments were those in which I relieved Mary from her heavy task of watch and ward, and those which gave, through my means, a gleam of satisfaction to Captain Bates. But I was not long to soothe and amuse our old friend. He had a severe paralytic stroke an hour after our interesting conversation about Mrs. Fortescue, and probably the very excitement which I conceived useful had hastened the catastrophe. Mr. Linton informed us of the attack at his evening visit. Captain Bates was alive, but perfectly unconscious ; he might linger some days longer : his mind was gone, and he lay powerless as a child.

This intelligence gave me a bitter pang, and overpowered Mary. She remembered Captain Bates in almost every scene connected with her single and married days, and memory brought him freshly before her view when, in high spirit and

mirth of soul, he had sung the "Bride's farewell" an evening or two before her own marriage. She probably felt the two lines in her soul,

"It may be he may never cheer my path as thou hast done;
It may be he may slight at last the being he has won."

for tears rolled down her cheeks, and she left the room for a long period: her eyes were swelled when she returned cheerfully to her post beside her cross husband.

I was resolved to see again the mortal part of Captain Bates, and I went early the following morning to the village. My constant attendance had given me a kind of right to enter his dwelling without notice, and I stole to the door of his chamber, where Miss Bates was standing apparently oppressed with her feelings. She had emotion, then, to bestow! I went up to her, and took her hand in mine with a gentleness which added to her distress: she could not have expected sympathy from one so cold and careless as I had ever been, and the change affected her. "Let me see him once more, Miss Bates," I said, deeply feeling for her sorrow, "let me see my poor friend again."

Miss Bates could not reply, but she pointed to the door: I entered, and beheld the long attenuated form of her father extended on the bed, but perfectly lifeless: he had expired an hour before my entrance. The sight of his pale corpse pro-

duced a torrent of tears ; I kneeled by the side of the bed and pressed the cold motionless hand which lay near me. I thought of our long acquaintance, our mutual short career of hopes and fears together—his once joyous songs, and fanciful theories. His distress and mine had commenced together—he was gone to rest, and was taken from our number, but I was struggling on in repentance, and Mrs. Fortescue was wandering to recover her peace. I prayed earnestly for our mutual trials to pass away, that we might yet be called to hope and happiness, and in that chamber of death I prayed for a humble spirit and a better heart : I rose comforted by long meditation, and sought Miss Bates. “ Can I do anything for you, Miss Bates, or would my company be useful to you ? I am quite ready to attend upon you.”

Miss Bates wept, but she declined troubling me : Mrs. Jones was to be with her, and she was to go to the vicarage after the funeral—she was obliged by my kindness to her poor father. It was indeed a consolation to me, as I slowly walked towards the Grange, to believe I had been instrumental in making his few last weeks comfortable : not in my days of vain glory and triumph did I ever enjoy a feeling so pure and grateful as the reflection that I had consoled his latter days, and that I had really given pleasure to a fellow-creature. I felt as though

I could even sit and be silent with Miss Bates, if it would soothe her grief.

Captain Bates's death caused much regret, his long residence and quiet manner had made him popular in the village, and to ourselves he was a loss which would not easily be replaced. He was always a welcome visiter, and no party had ever taken place without Captain Bates to add to its vivacity. His song would long dwell upon our memory, and his oddities would be more missed and lamented than even his powers of song. His death caused a vacuum in the friendly society, which nothing could redeem, and many rallied round the "cold and dull" Miss Bates in her distress, in remembrance of her father.

The funeral took place a week after his decease, and Miss Bates, for some time, became an inmate at the vicarage; and the *protégée* of Mrs. Jones. When time had reconciled her to her loss, she again took possession of the cottage, where she lived in complete seclusion with her cat and canary. No one ever saw Miss Bates but her friend Mrs. Jones.

Heavily passed the dreary winter with the doctor's long fit of gout: my mother and myself were sometimes quietly reinstated in our own home, and as suddenly summoned again to assist Mary in her wearisome avocations. February stole on, and with

its softening gales the Langhams reappeared at the Hermitage. They had much to tell and to learn, for Mary's correspondence had ended since she gave her hand to Drinkwater:—

“ Other thoughts I ween were there—”

her pen had ceased its flowing details, and her thoughts had no range beyond the ups and downs of the Grange buildings. Lady Langham was received with enthusiastic affection, and her beaming amiable face brought livelier ideas to our small, and now gloomy circle ; we grew gay as we listened to her animated conversation, and watched her sparkling eye. Two months' absence had improved Lady Langham's appearance ; but, go where she would, she carried her cordial with her, and time mellowed and strengthened her happiness. Sir James was with her, and his adoration remained unchanged : his wife was ever the one object of his thoughts and attentions, and I knew how that could charm all trials into insignificance, and lend roses to the cheek. Mary was becoming thin, and lines were forming under her patient eyes, which told a tale of sorrow, yet a twelvemonth had not elapsed since she appeared a bright creature at the altar, youthful, gay, and hoping ! Lady Langham followed too with “ measured steps and slow,” half fearing her own precipitancy, and she was loved and tendered by the best and kindest of beings,

till her heart was alarmed at its almost unnatural bliss. How can these things be fathomed?

Lady Langham had seen Mr. and Mrs. Stanhope and good Mrs. Burton at Bath. Mrs. Stanhope managed her husband as decidedly as she had done her mother, and both were equally happy under her control. They were living in Camden-place, and in excellent harmony. Mrs. Stanhope laid out the day's routine every morning at breakfast.

"Come now, you two old scrumps, suppose you sit an hour in the pump-room and gossip till I come to you?"

"I'm sure, Esther, you know I always hated gossip."

"You know you live upon it, mother: first course, cards removed with scandal, and a dessert of long stories from Stanhope."

"There, my dear, you are quite wrong; if any one dislikes a long story, it is myself."

"Well, you can both go and preach against those sins, and I will join you; and then, Stanhope, we will take my mother down to Victoria gardens, and I will pop her somewhere till you have worried some of your friends to death, and if you ask any one to dinner, just give me a kind of nod, and I'll order soup from Melan's as we go by."

Stanhope was perfectly content to do her bidding: in spite of her abrupt manner, her house and

husband were her chief concerns, and while she yielded to his tastes, and commanded him to do what he liked best, he did not feel the rein, or fear the ridicule of her remarks. Mrs. Burton would set forth under his arm, and love to listen to his prosings, which increased her admiration of his talents almost to awe, and Stanhope was charmed to have one auditor at least, who never wearied under his lengthened tiresome histories of stupid trifles. They were three happy busy people, and Mrs. Stanhope's matrimony promised almost as fairly as Lady Langham's.

The Stanhopes had an evening party to which the Langhams were invited; and there Mrs. Stanhope was seen in the brightest and darkest shades of her character. Lady Langham went rather late, and found a large company silently prosecuting whist. Six tables were formed, and no useless lounge, save Lady Langham, was allowed to appear. Sir James was nailed down in an instant. Mrs. Stanhope's voice was as loud as in her single state, when she led the way to Netley Abbey. The profound silence of the whist-players never discomposed its tone.

"Well, Lady Langham, I have got all the people down at last. I think Bath has as many widows and old maids as Southampton; but you know a card-table is all they live for, and they get it in both places. The old maids are worse than the widows

at whist: I was counting to Stanhope how many whist-players we could ask at our extremity, and we fairly reckoned up sixty-five."

"Sixty-seven!" exclaimed Mr. Stanhope, from a card-table; "sixty-seven, Esther!"

"Stanhope's ears are like a donkey's," said his lady, "they reach from one end of the room to the other. I like Bath, because my mother enjoys herself so much here, and she has no altercations with fly-drivers. Now and then, to be sure, she fights with a chairman—don't you, mother?"

Mrs. Burton heard nothing—she was deep in her game; but Stanhope was never asleep on his post.

"Only once, Esther; your mother only fought once."

"Don't answer for other people, Mr. Stanhope."

"I was there, Esther; I was with Mrs. Burton, and heard the chairman myself, and lectured him."

"Then I pity the chairman, Mr. Stanhope, for I dare say you lost him several fares while you were prosing. You know," she continued, to Lady Langham, "Stanhope will die telling the doctor a long story, and you may depend upon it the sexton will never get him safely under ground till he has risen up to tell him the best way to sharpen his pickaxe."

Mrs. Stanhope turned to a party who were rising from whist.

“Well, what are you all doing, now? Mr. Morley, pray sit down again; you know you are dying for another deal.”

“It has struck twelve,” replied Mr. Morley, looking at his watch.

“And what of that! All of you sit down again, directly. Mrs. Ramsbottom and Mr. Heaviside, you must both resume your seats; you have only played two rubbers.”

“Three, three rubbers, Esther!” said Stanhope, from his quarter of the room, without raising his eyes from his cards.

“Then they shall play four! That’s good people, sit you down, and shuffle away.”

Mrs. Ramsbottom reseated herself, and the rest quietly resumed their play. Mrs. Stanhope had yet to play a busy part before she could renew her conversation with Lady Langham.

“How is your great, ugly cat, Miss Anstruther?”

Miss Anstruther looked offended.

“Well, I ask after it, because I know it is your pet; but I think it frightful. Has it recovered those fits?”

“Minnie is quite well, thank you,” replied Miss Anstruther, drily.

“I must say I hate cats,” continued Mrs. Stanhope, “but I like to know people’s pets are doing well. My mother had a horrible monkey for some years, but I never offended it above once a week.”

Mrs. Stanhope passed on to another guest : her questions were abruptly asked, but every one allowed her the same latitude she had enjoyed in Southampton.

“Your sister expects her son to die very soon, Mrs. Raffles, I hear.”

“I fear he will not be spared long, Mrs. Stanhope ; he has suffered cruelly a long while.”

“I suppose so ; wont she be glad of it ?”

“Glad to lose her son, Mrs. Stanhope !”

“Oh ! I mean the release must be a blessing to him : he is quite upon a sort of crutches, you know, and no one can wish to see him stumping there all his life. I asked him if he would not be glad to go to a world where legs would not be necessary perhaps, and he said he really should.”

When the party broke up, Mrs. Stanhope was equally loquacious.

“Good night, Mrs. Ramsbottom ; well how you do crush your poor wig with that bonnet !—Mr. Raffles, if I ask what you have won by renouncing, I suppose you wont tell me the truth, so you may bow yourself out.—Do look at Mr. Stanhope persecuting Sir Thomas about lettuce-seed, and we have not a bit of garden to sow it in !—Mother, you are getting lethargic !”

“I am not asleep, Esther,” replied the quiet old lady.

“Yes, you are ; your eyes are quite closing :

Stanhope, now the company are gone, my mother will thank you for the shortest of your long stories, just to amuse her while I chat to Lady Langham."

Stanhope and Mrs. Burton played "beggar my neighbour," at a small round table very comfortably together, and when Lady Langham was leaving the room, she heard Mrs. Stanhope say, "And now, mother, you must toddle up stairs, and be sure you say your prayers after cheating."

Such was Mr. and Mrs. Stanhope's daily amusement, and they both appeared perfectly happy. Some characters amalgamate well together and enjoy life to the close: I think those happy beings are generally of the class denominated "common-place," whose views being limited, and of blunted feelings, they are rarely susceptible of disgust, and know not the meaning of refinement. Stanhope's prosiness was a perpetual jest to his lady, and he was equally accustomed to her sonorous voice, and often questionable remarks: they were, of course, excellently suited to be companions and friends.

Lady Langham had also seen Miss Ellis. Her brother had left her the whole of his fortune, subject only to my annuity, and she had a small lodging in Miles-court, where she resided with one maid-servant and the dogs. She told Lady Langham she meant to leave me the two thousand per annum in her will.

"I never liked Miss Vansittart much, but she is

welcome to keep it, for if she does not have it, I know no more than the dead who to bequeath it to; and my brother, he was very partial to her. As to keeping a carriage, I don't like the trouble, Lady Langham, and my servants used me ill; they did, indeed. I am very quiet here, and the dogs are never disturbed, so here I shall stay, and I hope no one will find me out."

Mr. Ellis had never again driven the horse which bore my name. It had been turned out for life, and was never more to be put in harness, for it was a sacred animal: it had drawn me in my days of ambitious vanity, and poor Mr. Ellis would not hear of its being sold, or used for any other purpose. Its partner, Stanhope, was disposed of.

Such was Lady Langham's account of what she had seen and heard at Bath, but there was yet another piece of intelligence which I must hear at some time or other. Captain Thelwal was in Paris, and Lady Anne O'Brien was his companion; they were deeply involved in play. At first this communication gave me exquisite pain: I could not bear to think that Lady Anne, she who was my companion and friend in my evil days, should be usurping my place, and living with my husband. It was a wretched combination of wounded love and mortified vanity, which for some time distracted me, but I owned the justice of my destiny, and endeavoured to bear the indignity with patient humi-

lity: yet, if there is a moment on earth which can illustrate our ideas of the torments of the condemned, it is when a woman loves devotedly, and finds her friend triumphing in her husband's heart, to her own utter exclusion. Oh! how my soul bowed under that infliction, ere I could rise and say, "Thy will be done;" but Lady Langham was now near me, and her ear was ever bent to listen to my sorrow, and her lips were ever nigh to speak comfortable things. I was much at the Hermitage: in Lady Langham's boudoir, once the pride of Mary's taste, I spent many tranquil hours, and reaped real instruction, for my spirit was humbled into lowliness, and vain regrets were quelled by meditation and prayer.

My life now passed in such extreme seclusion, that I lost even a wish to mix again in a world which had given me so much misery and cause for repentance; I never visited beyond the Grange and Hermitage: Captain Bates's death left a vacuum in my heart; he had been a fellow-sufferer, and with him I could talk of past scenes sacred to us alone; but now all was silence, and it was only in spirit I could meditate upon our once happy meetings at Hartley stile.

The following twelve months brought little to vary the even tenour of my life. Charlotte was a mother; her little one occupied all the attention she could spare from her parish annals, and though

Bradford was but twelve miles distant, we seldom met. They were devoted to their profession, and as both husband and wife went hand in hand in attending to the bodily and spiritual wants of their flock, they were universally beloved. Our time was devoted to the Grange and Mary, with equal ardour: the doctor was becoming a perfect nuisance, and his gout was a vampire which threatened to quit him only in his last agony. Mary began to wake from her long dream, and to be aware all was not bliss with dear, quiet Drinkwater: her pale face bore testimony to her private sufferings; and though a word of regret never passed her lips, I could read her heart in her altered countenance, and in the gentle tone of advice which she proffered to the Misses Clifden upon the subject of marriage. The young ladies, upon the point of being introduced, loved to discourse upon things they knew not, and with them matrimony sounded like the great gates which opened to perfect liberty and gaiety. Mary was often appealed to for her opinion, and she gave it with the sweetest smile in the world.

“Don’t be in a hurry, my dear young ladies: marriage is not always so desirable near as it looks in the distance. A thousand events and circumstances rise to trouble its smoothness, and I would caution you to be careful in not undertaking it too rashly.”

“Oh! but Mrs. Drinkwater, you have been so

happy, you of all people should advocate the state."

"The happiest of us," replied Mary, with a sigh, "find cares we little expected, and time brings many changes."

Miss Clifden particularly liked the idea of an invalid husband: there was something so pleasing and sentimental in nursing a sick man, she should delight in it. The man must be so grateful, and look so interesting reading upon a sofa, while she received company, or netted by his side: she should just like to be Mrs. Drinkwater or Lady Morton!

Mary shook her head, but did not reply to the last compliment: she only observed, Sir William was happy in possessing a very amiable wife.

"Oh! you would die to see them together sometimes," said Miss Ellen Clifden; "you know she thinks Sir William very plain, and tells him of it constantly, but without the least notion of offending, and he laughs heartily at her remarks."

"Sir William Morton is peculiarly good-tempered," replied Mary; "but I assure you invalids are not fond of a jest at their expense, and you must consider Sir William an exception to a very general rule."

If Sir William was an exception to one rule, I am sure poor Mary found the doctor a great exception to another, for his temper grew intolerably

violent: a wife with more spirit might perhaps have controlled its excess; but Mary bent to the storm, and withered under its effects. I was myself irritated by his harshness to my gentle sister, and there was yet fire enough in my composition to blaze forth when I was powerfully roused. I heard him in great wrath in "the cell" one hot morning in July, as I entered the Grange, and I hastened to check its fury by making my appearance; but the doctor was not so easily subdued now, and he continued his own pace.

"These d—n what's-his-names have not been aired, Mrs. Drinkwater; and you don't care, provided you are saved trouble, what inconvenience I suffer."

Mercy upon us!—"Mrs. Drinkwater," instead of "My dear Mary!"

Mary vindicated herself from her husband's charge, and assured him the flannels had been aired by her own hands.

"Can't I judge for myself?" exclaimed the doctor; "I may be worried with gout and your want of order, but I am neither blind nor deaf: I can see a damp stocking, Mrs. Drinkwater, and hear your impatient sighs."

I flew at him. "You see and hear, sir!—what can you see but your swelled feet and legs? and what do you ever hear but your own imprecations and impatience?"

The doctor looked at me in astonishment. I stood up with flushed cheeks and eyes of fire.

“ I ask you what you deserve, sir, for treating your wife like a menial, when she sacrificed her youth and gentleness to a wretched invalid ? You had far better have married your housekeeper, sir, as most gouty men do, for their coarse minds do not feel indignity, and my sister’s will pine beneath your violence : better release her from your thralldom, Dr. Drinkwater, and let her spend her days with me, both doomed to endure annoyance and deprecate ill-assorted matches. I deserved *my* misery, but Mary’s was not foreseen, and I will preach it to the heavens and to the earth, you wretched old man !”

Mary’s terror during my address was fearful : she stood motionless, expecting an awful exhibition of temper from her husband, and dared not lift her eyes from the ground ; but it was not so : the doctor sat like a snubbed child, and made no reply to my tirade. I followed up my advantage—if I could effect nothing with my own husband, at least I might control my sister’s partner—his malady made him dependent.

“ Mary, I offer you my income : do not submit to injurious treatment, or break our hearts with your poor pale face, which speaks so strongly of misery : leave that man, dear Mary, and come home ; we have enough for all, but do not think of his comfort !” I walked out of the room and pulled

the door after me with a slam, which I intended should electrify my brother-in-law, and which really did take effect. There is nothing more powerful with selfish, wayward husbands, than the simple movement of slamming a door, or throwing down the fire-irons : it conveys an idea of the thunder which may one day overwhelm them, and it conceals one's own trepidation under the imposing appearance of determined spirit. The banging of the door brought the doctor to a sense of his misconduct, and established me for ever as his Mentor ; but I never could induce Mary to attempt the same line of politics. She was benefited in some degree by my attack, for her husband feared his irritation becoming known to me might draw down a new lecture, but she entreated me never again to speak roughly to her poor Drinkwater in her presence.

“ He is not the good-tempered creature I married, Louisa, but it pains me to hear him remarked upon : you meant well the other day, but I cannot tell you what I endured when you called him a wretched old man.”

“ I was angry, Mary, and he was violent ; but it has been of singular utility. Some men are coaxed, and some must be upbraided into good behaviour. The doctor requires coercion, and banging the door once a week would purify his temper amazingly : you ruin him by indulgence.”

“ Opposition is vain, Louisa : I could not be

constantly arguing with Gideon; and if anything happened to him, I should never recover my remorse for having opposed him in his wishes."

"But then you sprinkle your path with thorns, Mary, and add to his malady. The doctor wants rousing, and giving him his own way will never do. You are like a poor hare, bewildered by the barking of a dog, and running into a springe through timidity."

" 'It is my vocation, Hal,' " quoth Mary, trying to smile.

I could only love Mary ten times more dearly for her sweetness of temper: she was doomed to tribulation.

CHAPTER VI.

TWELVE months had crept on and passed away, bringing peace to some and raising up sorrowful events to others. The dark cloud was removed from Emma Brereton's destiny, as the year elapsed, and she was now free to correspond with Charles, and visit among his friends. Charles wrote to Mr. Brereton, at the expiration of his allotted term, claiming Emma as his promised bride, and assuring him and herself of his unchanged affection. In six months, he hoped to be again in England, and his affectionate nature dwelt upon the hopes he fostered of being soon united to a woman so beloved, and so deserving of that love, as his own Emma. Mr. Brereton had nothing to oppose to my brother's wishes; they had both obeyed his restrictions, and abstained from correspondence, by which obedience their error obtained complete for-

giveness on his part, and Emma was allowed to write to her lover, as his acknowledged *affiancée*. How happy did she look when she came to us, according to our wish, and established herself for some weeks, as my mother's destined daughter. Again, her beauty resumed its freshness, and she stepped forth in youthful elasticity, glowing with health and an unseared conscience, the Emma Brereton of former days. Our once long-rooted antipathy at last expanded into friendship. She had bent under sorrow, which enlarges our charity; and she found me a humbled, deserted wife—no longer existing upon flattery, and the things which destroy our peace. At once we became friends, and my confinement was enlivened by her happy views and feelings. I confided all my sorrows to her keeping, and she mourned with me the faults which had drawn down the merited retribution. To her ear I could whisper my manifold sins of omission and commission, and she listened to all my regrets with sympathising attention and tears. “Ah, Louisa,” she would say, “how nearly my destiny might have equalled yours in suffering, had I brought down my father's curse, and persisted in my course of deception! Oh, let us watch and pray not to be led into temptation.” And we did pray to be spared to peaceful scenes of domestic quiet, beyond which nothing is truly satisfactory. With Emma I walked and conversed long hours,

and found real comfort in her society. She was just the person whose mild influence could lull one into repose of mind, and calm the heart, by listening patiently to its complainings. To herself I was also useful. While speaking hope to my soul, she unconsciously strengthened her own dependence upon the rock she pointed so forcibly to my attention ; and in our readings together, the balm she offered to my affliction, returned upon and soothed her own spirit. Emma was nearer my own age, consequently less a Mentor than I had been used to consider Lady Langham, and I never felt with her the oppression of confessing errors to the sinless. She had herself known error, and the recollection produced an equality which encouraged confidence. If I had chosen Emma in my early career, instead of Lady Anne, what a different colouring would my fate have received !

Emma would often pray earnestly after I had composed myself to sleep ; and as we occupied the same room, I could see her kneeling, and often weeping, as she folded her hands in deep solicitation to her Maker. I had received much benefit from prayer in my moments of sorrow ; but it seemed to me extraordinary that tears should flow when hope and happiness stood on the threshold of her heart. If Charles was ill, I could have understood the prayer which produced the emotion, but he was well, and on the point of returning home.

What was its cause ? I raised my head from the pillow.

“Emma, tell me why you weep : are you not happy in your hopes, and looking forward to the future with delight ? why do you sob so sorrowfully, my dear Emma ?”

“Yes,” she replied, “I am happy, but I am praying for its continuance ; how can I tell what trials are in store for me ? and I pray to meet all chastisements with patience.”

“Well indeed, Emma, I should pray when the time came, but don’t anticipate misery.”

“I do not ; I only ask for strength to bear the trials designed for my good. Charles has yet a voyage to perform, and if any thing should happen, where could I turn for support under my stunned feelings ? To whom could I fly for relief, when I had not asked my Maker for the blessing of his help and mercy in my hour of need ? I have endeavoured to gain composure under many fearful anticipations—perils by water—perils by land—sickness—oh ! it seems a blessing too great for me to receive, in seeing Charles safe and well !”

Emma astonished me ; I had never anticipated any event, or prayed for patience, as she was doing. My miseries had been thunderclaps which laid me low at once, for my impatient mind could not brook the idea of control or failure in my

hopes; and, as Lady Langham had once truly foretold, I was fated to gain my experience through suffering. But when Emma laid her head on her pillow after her prayers, soothed and strengthened by her communion with her Saviour, I felt the holiness of prayer; its deep peace—the peace not of this world—its calm and its wondrous effect upon the troubled mind. I reflected upon Emma's cheerfulness, her sparkling eye and patient hope: did all this spring from prayer? I spoke earnestly to her.

“Emma, does prayer give you strength to look fearlessly upon the chance of losing your lover? Had Thelwal been taken from me in the days of my trusting affection, no prayer, I think, would have enabled me to preserve my senses.”

“Oh, you had not then tried its influence, Louisa! Yes, I feel as if prayer and faith in His mercy would support me under any affliction now. I know I should sorrow, but not as one without hope. My dependence on the things of this world would be crushed for ever, but not my hopes of eternity; there we should meet again, and upon that eternity I should fix every thought, as indeed I ought to do now. But, alas! I dwell too much upon earthly blessings, and my poor heart struggles between the Creator and his creature.”

“I never struggled, Emma.”

“And that caused your overthrow, my dear

friend; had you prayed for peace, it might be, many events had passed away from you; there is a portion of evil which all must taste, and it is far better to cast one's burthen upon a merciful God, than to crawl hopelessly under the despairing weight, trusting to our own powers."

"I believe you, for had I not prayed when I left my husband's protection, I should not have lived to reach my mother's arms; but to think of such images of woe, as you contemplate—to forestal death and desolation, is to suffer its bitterness without a gleam of pleasure to enliven the present and future."

"Prayer does not bind, it does not scourge, Louisa. I am happy, truly happy, for I have implored that assistance which never fails us in our sorrow. If I weep, my tears are not in grief, but of thankfulness for renewed portions of cheerfulness. Do I look unhappy?"

"No, indeed, you are the picture of bright agreeable health; and did I not see you weep, I should imagine you existed upon ecstatic visions, and were wafted, even in the body, to visit Charles in his barracks."

Poor Emma found the consolation she sought: instead of idly wasting her hours in useless pining for Charles's return, as I should have done, her energies were given kindly and freely to others;

with cheerful attention she read or conversed with myself, attended my mother to the Grange, playfully endeavoured to soften down the doctor's asperity, and walked to the Hermitage to convey some little information of our proceedings to Lady Langham. In all these employments Emma found tranquillity, and she also gave delight. It was pleasing to contemplate her blooming face, and watch her agile movements, as she sought to relieve my mother or Mary in their household arrangements. I could not wonder at Charles's impetuosity under the idea of losing such a treasure, or his written ecstasies at the close of his probation.

I was not long destined to enjoy tranquillity. In the midst of my quiet morning readings with Emma, a letter reached me in Thelwal's handwriting, and roused all my dormant affection. It contained but few lines: he was ill, and he felt certain I would nurse him, when he assured me the malady was hopeless. He was confined to his bed at Fladong's, and certain feelings convinced him he should rise from it no more. My hands trembled so violently that Emma was obliged to hold the paper as I perused its purport. I was again in a powerful agitation, but Emma supported and cheered me.

“Go, Louisa, to your husband—now is your trial; and you will feel the approaching balm of a

mind fulfilling its duties. I will arrange your things and order the carriage to the door in one hour; remain here and collect your thoughts."

My mother turned very pale at the information conveyed to her by Emma, and she was preparing to join me when I rushed up stairs—I could not remain alone.

"Don't let it be an hour, Emma; let me go now—I cannot bear this inanimation—let me be moving."

"I shall accompany you, my dear child," said my mother, as tears burst from her eyes at the thought of my painful situation.

"Will you, indeed, mother? Oh, no! there's poor Mary, do not quit her in trouble; I can better bear my own deserved misery than she can endure that man's violence without your soothing presence. No, mother; stay with Mary, and Emma will write to me and comfort me. I have a stubborn spirit, and can bear much, but he will not offend me now. Poor Thelwal, are you, indeed, on the bed of sickness!—yes—I will fly to you now this moment." My heart swelled within me almost to bursting, and I was glad to be relieved by a fit of long and uncontrollable weeping. When I recovered some degree of composure, I felt equal to the task I was preparing to undertake, and I could converse with my mother and Emma on the scenes I was about to enter. I declined my dear mother's attendance;

.

I was going to my husband to attend upon him only, and I would not hear of her being taken from Mary's sight to witness a scene which would painfully affect her at her age, and could not benefit myself. Emma would be everything to her, and I should not be anxious about her well-doing ; I consigned her to the care of one who was already her daughter in affection, and, provided her health continued good, I knew she must be cheerful and happy in her attentions. All was speedily arranged for my journey, and, springing from the prayers and blessings of my two beloved companions, I was again and for the third time conveyed from my home, under equal excitement and uncertainty.

The journey was achieved without accident and without rest. I reached town as day broke on the following morning, and drove instantly to Fladong's. Not a soul was up ; silence and desolation was in Oxford-street—that stirring and bustling emporium of mortality ; and it was with some exertion the post-boy succeeded in effecting my entrance. I inquired if Captain Thelwal was alive, as I passed rapidly to the room once occupied by myself. I was arrested by the waiter stepping before me.

“ Not there, ma'am, if your please ; Captain Thelwal is in the room beyond.”

The waiter remembered my face ; he had attended upon us during our stay at Fladong's, but I had forgotten him ; he felt for me at this moment.

"This was once my dressing-room," I replied ;
"it must be his now."

"Excuse me, ma'am ; a lady sleeps there !" The man hesitated.

"A lady in his dressing-room !—Who is she ?"
I turned to receive the waiter's answer in astonishment.

"Lady Anne O'Brien has that apartment, ma'am."

I thought I should have sunk upon the ground—a giddiness seized me. What, was I entreated to rejoin my husband while a mistress nursed and soothed his dying hours ! Was there no end to these indignities ? I staggered, but the kind-hearted waiter caught me, and carried me into the sitting-room—that room which witnessed my agony when Mrs. Smithe was before me.

"Not here—not here," I murmured, as the man gently deposited me upon the sofa.

"Every other room is engaged, Mrs. Thelwal ; but if you please I will get a little coffee to refresh you."

"How do you know my wretched name ?" I asked, starting upon my feet ; "how do you know I am Captain Thelwal's deserted wife ?" I knew not what I uttered.

"I waited upon you, ma'am, many months ago," replied my attendant ; "and Captain Thelwal remained with us till he went to France—if you please

I will bring you a cup of coffee, and you will be more refreshed."

Brown was not long absent ; at his return I had again sunk upon the sofa deluged in tears, and the coffee was refreshing to my exhausted powers. "Speak on, Brown, and tell me how your master is, for I must see him immediately."

"The Captain is very ill, ma'am ; but I think the lady worries him very much, for they are constantly disagreeing."

"I will go to him now, Brown," and I raised myself from the sofa. "I will see him now, or I may not have strength to undertake it."

Brown still appeared anxious to delay my purpose, but I was resolute in going instantly to my husband's presence. I was quite prepared for unpleasant scenes, but I had learned discretion, and acquired some degree of patient calmness from repeated suffering. I passed, weak and trembling, to the door which admitted me to the bedside of Thelwal, and with one desperate effort I entered—to behold a scene of cruel agony. It was now broad daylight, and the curtain of one window being drawn aside, I saw my husband lying helplessly in his bed, while Lady Anne O'Brien bent over him, in her dressing-gown, administering some medicine. My soul fired at the sight ; but I uttered no exclamation, and betrayed no paroxysm of jealousy. I was too deeply wounded to give way

to any impetuosity. I advanced towards Lady Anne with trembling steps, but I did not strike her to the ground, or utter a complaint ; I only took the cup from her hand, and begged her to return to her slumbers.

“ I am here now, Lady Anne, to wait upon my husband, and I will relieve you from this disagreeable duty ; pray return to your room, and allow me to take your place.”

Lady Anne looked at me as though a spirit from another world had risen through the floor.

“ My God — Louisa Vansittart ! What has brought *you* here ?”

“ Mrs. Thelwal, if you please, is my name, Lady Anne, and I am come to attend upon my husband ; pray do not let me keep you from your slumbers.”

Lady Anne recovered her nonchalance, piqued by my tone of irony.

“ My dear love, don’t consider me ; I have only acted as a fellow-creature should act by a poor sick man, whose wife had deserted him.”

“ Your ladyship’s kindness defies my weak expression of gratitude ; I must leave your merit to an approving conscience, for I cannot requite it.”

Thelwal heard voices, and was roused by the sounds, though his eyes were still closed ; he spoke in weak and suffocated accents.

“ I wish you two women would be quiet ; you

plague me to death with your quarrels—send Mrs. Smithe away, Anne.”

“I am here, Thelwal,” I cried, bending over his pallid cheek, and wetting it with my tears, “I am here—your own wife—to nurse and comfort you.”

“Louisa, is it indeed you?” Thelwal opened his eyes and gazed upon me. “Are you really come to me again?—I did not think you would.”

“It was my duty, Thelwal, and I came to obey your wish of seeing me.”

“Will you prevent these women quarrelling over me, Louisa?”

“No one shall see you but myself, Thelwal ; fear nothing.”

Lady Anne heard our dialogue, and took her measures accordingly. I used to admire her free and daring manners, but now they disgusted my soul.

“Women, my dear friend,” she remarked, “never quarrel over a poor stricken creature like yourself, and in your case a wife is a judicious exchange. I will leave you to her charge ; they are enduring creatures, and are always in request when men become too old or ill to transgress.” Lady Anne kissed her hand lightly and playfully to me, and quitted the apartment.

And this was the brilliant Lady Anne of Marlborough House, my once friend and companion, whose reputation, though tarnished, was not at that time lost, but whom my own family deprecated in

the strongest terms. She was now the instrument of my punishment, and threw back upon me the consequences of an ill-judged choice. Her name had been an incubus upon my peace, and I had borne the galling knowledge of her connexion with my husband. All this was the fruit of my headstrong, daring self-will ! I could have wept bitterly over my sin, and its consequences ; but my poor Thelwal's state claimed all my attention, and I exerted myself to throw off for the present all bitter recollections. When Lady Anne had withdrawn, Thelwal tried to raise himself in his bed, but his weakness forbade the effort. I counselled him to lie tranquilly and try to sleep. " Remember, my dear Thelwal, I am watching by you, and your sleep may be a great restorative ; sleep, Thelwal."

" Will you promise not to leave me, Louisa ?"

" I am here, Thelwal, till you express a wish for my departure ; and while I am here with you, no one shall assume my right in nursing."

" Is that woman quite gone—are you sure she will not come back—or that Mother Smithe ?"

" Neither will presume to intrude upon *me* at least, Thelwal, and while you are ill they will not seek you."

" I will never see their faces again, Louisa, even if I recover."

" Don't make rash promises ; but I want you to sleep."

“ I will try to rest if you will lie by me ; at least, I shall be tranquil when I feel you near me.”

I was very tired, and repose to both parties might be useful. I closed the window-curtain, and gently laid myself by my husband's side ; he was gratified by the movement. “ Give me your hand once more, Louisa,” he whispered ; I did so, and we both gradually sunk into profound repose.

I slept many hours ; when I awoke my hand was still grasped by Thelwal, and he still slept, though his breathing was short and difficult. I could now observe the change which had taken place since we parted, in his once athletic beauty ; his face was so pallid, so attenuated, so careworn—the figure had become so emaciated and feeble—it was painful to contemplate the horrible devastation which a twelve-month had effected. I remembered him in the days of my affection, when I worshipped his manly beauty, and believed him all faith and honourable of purpose ; these were the remains of him who had won my love, and caused me such cruel affliction ; for him I had done that which must embitter my future life. I had sacrificed to him my own hopes, my family's peace of mind, Lord Elford—all who trusted in me ; and I was now to soothe the last moments of a man who, after all my sacrifices, had confessed he loved Mrs. Fortescue alone, and whom I found attended by a mistress, once my friend and companion in folly and mean vanity ! Truly I was

well requited for my labour in evil doings, and for my pertinacity in rejecting the counsel of those who sorrowed over me. My thoughts were too bitter as I imaged all these things, and the quick falling tears compelled me to withdraw my hand from Thelwal's pressure ; the movement disturbed and irritated him.

" Can't you have mercy upon a poor dying devil, Anne, that you persist in disturbing me ?"

" It is I, Thelwal, not Lady Anne," I replied, replacing my hand in his.

" Oh, you, is it ? yes, I remember now, and am happy ; you will not tease me as those women have done. I wish I could sleep again."

" Perhaps you will, Thelwal."

" No ; this fever is coming on again ; and I shall be restless now for hours : every other day I have this fever in my blood."

I arose and opened the window ; it was mid-day, and the cool air blowing upon the face of my invalid refreshed and composed him ; he spread out his hands to enjoy the breeze of a beautiful October day.

" No one ever opened a window for me, or cared whether I lived or died," murmured he : " I was left here like a dog, to expire in the close air of a d—d hotel, and I believe those women quarrelled over my goods, for I heard them incessantly inveighing against and offending one another."

“ You will hear those disputes no more, Thelwal ; I am going to refresh myself and order breakfast. Enjoy this delicious air till I bring you a little tea.”

“ Don’t leave the room, in mercy don’t leave me !” exclaimed Thelwal, with restless impatience ; “ if you are not constantly in my sight I shall have deliriums ; you must not quit me, dearest.”

How those words would have affected me months ago, when a kind expression was all I desired on earth ! Now, they fell coldly on my ear, as the plaint of a mind wearied with its own thoughts, or disgusted by the ill-treatment of the harpies who had dissipated his fortune. My duty, however, was clearly before me, and I resolved never more to stray from its path. I did not quit him ; my breakfast was brought to his bedside, and I thought him refreshed in body and mind by the influences of air and the society of his own lawful wife ; one, whose duty and pleasure would alike impel her to minister to his illness, and soothe the irritation of his mind. Thelwal’s mind, however, was ruined by indulgence, or the real nature of his character became developed by long illness and vexation, for I soon became aware of its cold and selfish indifference to my own comforts. Lady Anne had departed, and her room, which opened into our chamber, again became useful to me as a place of refuge, to which I could retire and weep while my

husband slept. My appetite and strength gradually declined for want of rest and exercise, and my temper chafed and creamed under hourly unkindness and fits of harshly-expressed impatience. I was rarely ever permitted to quit the sick chamber, and yet my presence ceased to please. I submitted to much vexation in silence, for I was becoming lowly in my own eyes, but there were moments when I rose in spirit and contested every inch of ground with my tyrant; I contested and resisted his desire that I should be imprisoned in the sick chamber beyond a certain period. For one whole month I had devoted myself to attendance, without requiring the benefit of fresh air, but I became languid in consequence; and, in obedience to Dr. Phillips's orders, I began preparations for a daily walk in the Park. This was vehemently opposed by Thelwal. It was in vain I pleaded my inability to continue severe watchings and close confinement without daily exercise. Thelwal became enraged.

“Very well, go by all means: women are never content to be still when one is dying; they must have their gaiety and their walks, which consist in staring into shop windows, and flirting about the Park. The devil a bit do *they* care what an invalid is enduring.”

“I tell you, Thelwal, I am unequal to get

through my fatigues without some relief; if I fall ill, who then will nurse you?"

"Yes, you must put forward some apology for deserting me: what is to make you ill? I give no trouble to speak of, though you may fancy it vastly fatiguing."

I compressed my lips, and the retort was withheld.

"I hate sulkiness, Mrs. Thelwal; it's just worse than giving way to passion, but both extremes are odious; pray keep your appointment, or whatever it is, in the Park."

Dr. Phillips was announced before I could set forth: he was shocked at my appearance.

"Have you not taken exercise, Mrs. Thelwal? I have long pressed that point; if you keep in this close atmosphere you will sink, and be of no use to your invalid."

"Ladies are soon tired, doctor," said Thelwal, "when they have only an invalid to amuse them."

"There I differ with you, sir. In my experience, I have ever borne testimony to the unwearied care of female nurses, even when no ties of relationship bound them to an object. I have seen their patience and gentleness under very trying circumstances, and I am willing to acknowledge we should not do by each other, what they perform

so kindly and ably by us. No, no, sir, let us do justice to our gentler half."

Thelwal was silent, but his curled lip evinced his dissent from the doctor's remark. Dr. Phillips inquired how his patient had passed the night. I replied, my husband had slept, I thought, more tranquilly than usual.

"That is very well to suppose when you sleep soundly yourself, and make guesswork of your neighbour's repose," replied Thelwal, with acrimony; "but I have, in fact, no rest, Phillips; and I wish you would repair my broken constitution."

Dr. Phillips shook his head smilingly.

"Of course, you mean I shall never recover, but I think you will both be disappointed; I have no intention of dying, however desirable that event might prove."

"Mrs. Thelwal," said Dr. Phillips, affecting deafness to Thelwal's rough speech, "go into the Park, and take a few turns; it is absolutely necessary for your preservation; go now, my dear lady, while I relieve you; I will chat a quarter of an hour with your husband."

I departed in tears, unable to enjoy the delicious air of Heaven; yet it braced my nerves. A few turns in the Park, with a group of friends and a happy mind, would have been most enjoyable; but with heaviness of heart and alone, it was the very

spirit of loneliness. The gaily dressed females, the groups of lovely children, the passing and re-passing increased the feeling of desertion, and I turned intuitively to retrace my steps. I could not endure my own thoughts. I passed through the gate into Oxford-street, blinded by tears, and was suddenly thrown to the ground. I know not how the accident occurred; I saw nothing, I heard no sound to warn me of danger, but I was engrossed with miserable thoughts, which had blinded and deafened me to outward objects and sounds. I was conveyed senseless to the Hyde Park hotel, and my corpselike complexion gave every token that life was extinct. I believe it was an hour ere I recovered sufficiently to understand my situation, and then the first object my eyes encountered was Lord Elford. My brain wheeled round at that distracting view; I unconsciously addressed his lordship, "Edmund, are you come to see me die?"

"I trust not, Mrs. Thelwal," replied Lord Elford, in calmer tones than I had spoken.

His lordship's manner restored me to recollection: I sighed forth the name of Dr. Phillips, and sunk into silence. Lord Elford lingered till the doctor appeared. I had received no injury beyond a fall—which, in my weak state of body and mind, had caused a severe shock. I had been struck down by the shaft of Lord Elford's cabriolet, and

it was under the impression of serious alarm that he remained near me till Dr. Phillips arrived. I saw him speak anxiously to my friend, and then quit the room without bestowing one look upon me, or addressing a word of hope as to my recovery. How was I pained by that silent departure ! how it spoke of disapprobation and disgust !

Dr. Phillips conveyed me in his carriage to Fladong's, and saw me placed in a bed in a remote apartment from that of my husband. I was too ill to contend, but I thought of Thelwal's irritation when he should learn my accident. Dr. Phillips was peremptory.

"Your husband's malady increases the irascibility of his natural temper, Mrs. Thelwal ; but you are not to be sacrificed by its effects. I shall procure him an excellent nurse, and you must have rest."

"Don't let Thelwal have Lady Anne again !" I exclaimed in alarm.

"He shall have no one but Nurse Barnes, and I am superintendent," replied the doctor. "You have nothing to do but sleep."

"How can I rest, doctor, when my heart is heavy, and my spirit worn down with care and distress ?"

"Poor thing !" replied my excellent friend, pressing my hand, "we must calm you, and provoke Morpheus. Rest satisfied I will do all I can

for both to enjoy a quiet night ; and to-morrow you may see him again."

I started—my thoughts had rested upon Lord Elford. "No, doctor, I had better not see him—I would rather not see him again."

"Well, keep quiet, and do not talk now ; we will chat again this evening a little. Nurse Barnes will attend you both."

The doctor quitted me, and I tried to rest ; but sleep long withheld its boon. I struggled to withdraw my thoughts from contemplating the remembrance of Lord Elford's cold, collected manner, his withdrawn eye, and calm indifference in quitting me. I vainly sought to expel the image which stood before me like statuary marble, immovable and cold. I became feverish and restless ; and not till Nurse Barnes crept to my bedside and silently administered a narcotic, did I calculate upon sleep—that restorative, so healing and so blessed to sufferers : at length, drowsiness stole over me, and I sunk into long and deep repose.

I was refreshed by my night's oblivion of all events and feelings, and when Dr. Phillips's voice gave me pleasurable notice of his approach, I felt quite equal to rise and resume my situation by Thelwal's bed-side. Dr. Phillips pronounced me well in essential matters, but as this was the first *tête-à-tête* we had ever enjoyed together, the opportunity was embraced by him, to hold a long and

interesting conversation with me. I now learned, for the first time, the state of my husband's health.

In accents of gentle kindness, but in words which pierced my soul, I was told to relinquish all hope of his restoration to health. Decay had begun its work upon him, and though the termination might be lengthened, or suddenly hastened by circumstance, the blow had been struck, which must sooner or later remove my husband from my sight, and it was his duty to prepare me for the inevitable event, that I might surround myself by my friends, and meet my trials in patience.

I heard all this. I heard Dr. Phillips summon me to call for fortitude upon my Maker, and bear the sorrow which so many thousands were enduring with me; but I could not answer him for many minutes. Lord Elford—all, was forgotten! I forgot Thelwal's harshness and cruelty to myself—I forgot his deception—his love for another—I remembered the gay and handsome creature who had won my love. The memory alone remained of all I had loved; and the dark shading passed from the picture of my wrongs. I was to lose my husband!—my once beloved! Oh, Thelwal! Thelwal!"

Dr. Phillips allowed the first agony to subside in silence; it was only when sobs and tears forced their way that he took my hand, and spoke of comfort, and hope, and faith. It was then he poured

forth a flood of consolation, in speaking of a merciful Redeemer, a Saviour of mercy, the God of sinners, anxious to save. I listened to his wisdom and was healed in spirit.

“My dear Mrs. Thelwal, you have still infinite mercies left to you. You have still a God, a home, and a fortune ; much misery is spared you by the recollection of your duty having been performed. You are his nurse and his friend ; and the poor, weak body, which is decaying the temper, will receive its last comforts from a faithful and patient wife.”

“Yes, I will leave him no more, doctor,” I exclaimed ; “I will not again leave his room : let me seek to make his last hours pleasant, and perhaps I may be an instrument to convey calm and blessed hope to his poor spirit. Leave me, my kind friend, and let me thank my God in prayer for raising you up in this my most trying hour of all, and I will then go to my poor Thelwal.”

Dr. Phillips left me to reflect upon his powerful and consoling words, to pray for pardon and peace, and form resolutions for conducting myself with resignation under the trials allotted me. I then rose, and attended my husband.

I thought his countenance changed when I looked upon him ; a spot upon each cheek-bone reflected if possible the livid whiteness of his face, and there was a haggard expression of distress in the eye

which alarmed me, and gave my face a look of terror, for Thelwal instantly observed it.

“ Well, what do you put on that long face for ? —what do you stare at ?—I’m not going to die, though you did stay away all yesterday and send an ugly old devil to disturb me. I never expected you would return.”

“ My dear Thelwal, I was very ill ; Dr. Phillips must have told you so.”

“ Dr. Phillips will swear to anything, I dare say, if you bribe him well ; every man has his bribe. So Elford picked you up : I hope he was complimentary upon that agreeable renewal of acquaintance. Did you tell him I was dying, Louisa ?”

“ I never exchanged words with his lordship,” I replied, sitting calmly down by his bedside : “ my dear Thelwal, do not be so irritable.”

“ Oh ! I am very irritable, and very violent, because I ask a simple question ! Your patience is oozing away, Mrs. Thelwal, like Bob Acres’s courage ; and when a word is said which you fancy unnecessary, then tears are to flow, and I am a tyrant.”

Thelwal’s harshness no longer affected my indignation. I wept, it is true ; but my tears proceeded from the yet painful idea of losing him. I would have borne much to have secured him a return to health ; and tears could not be restrained when I saw his poor emaciated form contending

with the ebbing passions of earthly frailty. I often endeavoured to draw my husband's attention to future hopes, and the contemplation of his Maker, but he resisted all conversation which trenched upon religious consolation.

"I certainly did not imagine I had married a methodist," he would say with asperity : "invalids are generally amused with light and agreeable conversation, not long faces and dull remarks, as though they were dying. What taught you that whining voice and sanctified look, Mrs. Thelwal ? or who put those long hard words into your head ?"

"Long suffering, my dear Thelwal."

"What was your long suffering to mine, worried to death by sharpers and those two violent women ? Pray favour me with a more lively face, or that brown-faced devil the nurse will be a more merciful object for my eyes to rest upon. I should like to know when I may get up again, for I want to go down to Richmond once more."

"Do not be in a hurry, my love ; perhaps a week or two may enable you to rise with more ability."

"You might have spared your remark, I think : when people have been three months in their bed, they need not be accused of hurrying their movements. I shall make a trial, however, if you will have the goodness to put out my things : I am afraid the enormous fatigue will overpower you."

"My dearest Thelwal," I exclaimed, do not mis-

calculate your strength, by attempting to rise ; at least wait for Dr. Phillips's next visit, and then I will wait upon you hand and foot, my love : do not alarm me by trying to rise at this moment."

" Pooh, nonsense !—don't let me be worried by your womanish fears :—do you think I am dying ? Do you fancy me an idiot to be controlled by a woman's tongue ?—I will get up, I tell you."

Thelwal rose up in his bed with effort, and my anxiety only increased his resolution : his appearance was fearful to witness ; so worn out, yet so violent in his passions.

" For Heaven's sake, do not rise, Thelwal, till I ring for assistance : if you fall, I am unequal to raise you : let me ring for Brown."

" At your peril," roared Thelwal, in hoarse and angry accents, " at your peril oppose me ! If you think I am so near death you may be disappointed ; but I will at once undeceive you."

He sprung with one fierce effort from his bed, and stood upright before me. " Ha ! ha ! you see I have strength still left ; you can now witness my powers, and judge of my illness. Am I weak ?—Am I ill ?—Am I the poor, weak ass you and Phillips take me for ?"

I stood aghast at the movement : his long dressing gown, his attenuated figure, and wild, haggard expression of face, gave him the appearance of a lunatic. I flew to the bell and rang it almost

unconsciously and in desperation : this action infuriated him.

“ What, you have dared to disobey me !—you have dared to fly in my very face, and throw your care of me upon menials ! Go back to your home, and leave me instantly. I can attend to my own wants ; and you, poor, frightened, useless thing, go to your mother, and sit in empty finery—I’ll none of such vain trifling things !”

Brown appeared at the moment, and Thelwal was arrested in his career of passion. I was terrified beyond all control.

“ For Heaven’s sake, Brown, stay by Captain Thelwal, or he will die, and I am too ill to assist him : do not leave him for me, Brown, till you have got him into bed— return into bed, my own dear Thelwal.”

“ Then you *do* think I am dying ?—No, you are not released yet ; you have still years of tyranny to endure, madam, and all your wishes are vain. Here I stand, firm in strength, and if you send your menial to touch me, by all that’s sacred, I’ll strike him to the ground !”

Terror almost paralyzed me : I could not utter one word, and my feet were rooted to the spot. Brown was probably more accustomed to deal with delirium, which was evidently attacking Thelwal’s mind, for his manner was soothing, and he approached his master fearlessly ; but the exhibition

of passion was now ended, and the slight strength of fever was exhausted. When Brown reached my husband all effort was over, he sank a heavy lifeless burden into his arm, and was raised again upon his bed. Dr. Phillips was sent for instantly.

I watched many days by the side of Thelwal : the exertion of rising had been too much for his power, already sinking, and he never spoke again ; but I had the consolation of watching his remnant of life and closing his eyes in peace. I am assured he felt the consolation of my presence, for his poor dying eyes rested long and often upon me, and he never became quite composed unless my hand lay in his own, which he held for hours, and which was never relinquished without restlessness. He passed away in tranquillity : I saw him turn his head towards me and fix his eyes upon my face, but I was reading prayers by his side, and my only knowledge of his release was in the startling feeling of his hand having grown cold in mine.

CHAPTER VII.

I WAS not bereft in this my hour of tribulation. I struggled with grief and the recollections of the past, which almost brought on phrensy; but Dr. Phillips's care, under a gracious Providence, warded off its horrible approach. Sir James Langham was at Fladong's two days after my bereavement; his attentive care paid the last sad rites, and he followed my husband to his early grave as the companion of his youth, when as yet his heart was untouched by the powerful tastes which led him astray, and when each were gaily fluttering in the sunshine of careless happy enjoyment. How forcible was the contrast between my husband's fate and his friend's more happy career! How truly and rightly did Sir James Langham prophesy his own happiness when he selected such a wife as Miss Partington from the world of gay beauty which crowded his path! But his heart

had been the seat of truth and honour, and vanity had never incited it to trifle with his own peace, or wound the hope of others. Thelwal's vanity, intense as my own, sought its gratification, till all ties were broken down which breasted its encroachment; and when we met—when the tides of vanity and folly rushed violently into contact—it shipwrecked our peace for ever. We had played a deep and fearful game with each other, and my infatuated spirit sought out its own punishment. But Thelwal could pain my heart no more: the voice was silent now which had power to subdue my heart, yet destroy my married happiness: the eye was closed now which had lured me from the path of duty, to wed myself with woe and a long vain repentance. All was ended: the curtain had fallen, and I was a widow.

Sir James Langham remained a fortnight at Fladong's, till all my affairs were completed, and he then accompanied me into Gloucestershire: from him I learned that Lord Elford had been watching over me through the medium of Dr. Phillips, and he had by letter communicated to himself the inevitable result of Thelwal's illness. Lord Elford had been every day at our hotel to ascertain the state of my health from Dr. Phillips, and his daily correspondence with Lady Langham on the subject prepared Sir James to act for me in my extremity. The sudden termination of his existence did not

allow Sir James the melancholy pleasure of being near his old companion in his last moments, but his active mind did much : he soothed the poor widow in her affliction, and never wearied in well-doing. He would not hear my thanks.

“ I am never better pleased than when I am useful, Mrs. Thelwal, and Anne sent me off with her blessing, which you know is becoming a rare occurrence now, therefore I was obliged to deserve it.”

I did not ask where Lord Elford was, or whether they met during his stay in town. Certain recollections forbade the mention of his name, but I felt the delicacy and kindness of his conduct. He had told me his was no common love, and deeply wounded and disgusted as he must have been with my heartless treatment, he had proved the truth of his remark by his watchfulness. I should have been glad to know he was well and happier than I could have made him, had destiny given me to his faithful affection.

My heart bounded with renewed and strong delight when I was again given to the arms of my mother and the affectionate Emma. I returned a widow in outward bearing, but the shelter of my home healed many inward pangs : the sweet voice of my mother blessing her child after a bereavement which she had also undergone before me, the smile and fond embrace which welcomed me again

to her heart, was a charm too powerful for a bruised and exhausted spirit to resist. I clung to her with the ecstatic knowledge that her love was not to be the capricious love of man ; that her embrace would grow warmer as time rolled its years over me, and that parental love alone closed its tenderness with its last sigh. I only turned from her to feel the embraces of my sisters, who were now testifying their love, and from their sweet caresses I again was released to meet the kind sympathy which brightened the expressive faces of Emma and her brother.

But Mary looked pale and changed, when our first feelings had subsided and I could gaze calmly on the family party. Her sweet smile was there, but it stole upon us less frequently, and the tone of her voice was low and melancholy. Her husband was too unwell to join us, and the hour was nearly passed which he had allowed her to give exclusively to my return. When her carriage was announced, Mary immediately arose, but the spring of her mind was gone : she turned to salute me with tears rushing to her eyes, and their expression seemed to envy the reunited ones who now smiled round her. She evidently dreaded her husband's presence, and retired in distress. Her step, once so buoyant, lingered in its movement, and Mary left us to attend upon the invalid her love had

adorned with so many lovely attributes. What had Mary and myself gained by matrimony?

I was a widow, again in possession of two thousand per annum, and again free to choose my own path ; but I had suffered enough of misery, and for the future I cared but little provided my family were near me, and my mind could pursue its tranquil avocations. My first anxiety was to learn the fate of Mrs. Egerton. I wrote to her requesting she would confide her sorrow and her wants to a fellow-sufferer. I told her I had now an income and a home to offer her, and I besought her to rouse herself, and fly from her degradation to the society of the virtuous, and to those who sympathized in her distress.

A very few lines answered my glowing petition : Mrs. Egerton warmly thanked me for my interest, and acknowledged the receipt of several small sums which I had enclosed to her, and which had procured her some comforts under long and pressing illness ; but she said her hour was drawing near for her final liberation, and her soul was already prepared and longing for its flight. She besought a blessing upon my head, and hoped I might never be induced to marry again. She would write again if her strength admitted of such an exertion ; but, if her silence was a lengthened one, I was to suppose her at rest with her Maker. I wept over this

letter, and memory brought before me the scenes in which our acquaintance was made, and the sufferings under which it was perfected. I heard no more from Mrs. Egerton: she was summoned to peace, which one error had withdrawn from her here, to enjoy it for evermore where strife is unknown; but her friends never replied to her prayer for pardon, or her assurance that she was a dying penitent.

I visited Bradford, and saluted my second little niece, born during my absence, but whom Charlotte left under its nurse's care when she met me at my return home. I saw Henry and Charlotte happy in their round of domestic duties, beloved by their parishioners, and content with each other. Henry had grown stout, and was not the fine sentimental youth who won my regard in Bath, but he was the affectionate husband of my dear Charlotte, and I had learned to respect worth for its own sake. I could now be useful, and repay in some measure the undeviating kindness of my friends. My fortune was ample for every rational want, and many purposes of charity. A certain amount was appropriated by Charlotte towards advancing the comforts of her female flock, and I insisted upon defraying their expenses from the annual sum secured to me by Mr. Turner Ellis. I felt certain my income would only be blessed to me in the charitable disposal of that portion of it; and weary

of the wealth, which in its acquisition and past disposal had caused so much sorrow, I dedicated it to the relief and benefit of others who might require the assistance which money alone commands. It could not purchase peace of mind, or buy medicine for a seared conscience, but it procured comforts for the dying mendicant, and softened the hard couch of penury and disease. In such a disposition of the property intrusted to my care, I received the blessing of revived tranquillity, and health was again visiting my cheek and animating my exertions. I turned away from luxuries which had never given me real satisfaction. My elegant equipage no longer attracted the eye of public approbation, or drew notice upon the "poor young widow Thelwal," as it had done towards the dashing Louisa Vansittart. I did not rate such garish trifles at the high value which I once believed them to possess : it is true, they brought me Thelwal's attention and his hand in marriage, but they could not offer me his heart or esteem : of what use, then, were they to me now ?

Charles gave notice of his arrival in England early in April, and Mr. Brereton appeared at Bradford to receive him, and support his daughter. Emma joined her father at Bradford and awaited the hour which was to give her again and for ever to her absent one. We lamented her departure, for never did a more endearing creature exist than

the Emma Brereton whom I once so energetically despised. She departed in smiles and tears, and though scarcely twelve miles apart I missed every hour the gentle winning tenderness of her manner, and the firm principles of her highly-cast mind. But she was gone in rich hope to gather her reward for obedience and humble submission.

Charles was detained longer than he expected at Portsmouth, but he burst at last from his fetters and joined us late one evening when we had relinquished all hope of seeing him for some days. His appearance was startling, and I did not instantly recognise my gay brother in the sun-burnt face which presented itself to my caress. His eyes were dreadfully bloodshot, and he wore a green shade. Charles sprang forward to meet my mother with all his usual turbulence of great spirits, and he twirled her three times round, with his wonted playfulness, as he kissed her with affectionate fervour. To me, his address was delicate and affecting. "My dear Louisa, I have heard and felt for all your troubles, but you have now a brother to defend you, and had I only guessed half your sorrow, I would have turned deserter to be near you: but Langham I hear has represented me, and I shall thank him for his kindness to my sister." As he spoke, he pressed me to his bosom with a warmth which recompensed me for many sorrows.

I could only burst into tears.—He changed the subject.

“ Well, my best mother, I cannot stay with you, for I must on to Bradford to see my little treasure, and ask her if she could promise to admire two bloodshot eyes.”

At this late hour we both protested against the visit: What, brave the night air to disturb a dormant family, and perhaps lose his sight by the rashness? Nonsense! We contested and argued the matter till time slipped by and it grew too late to journey forward. To remain the night with us was a thing of necessity, and then we learned the history of his eclipsed eyes. He had been suffering some months with ophthalmia, which was affecting his sight, but which he would not communicate to Emma, or any of us, by letter: one eye was already, he said, little better than a bit of egg-shell, but if Emma loved him he should not heed the deprivation of one eye; he could admire her with the other, and his heart was beyond the reach of ophthalmia; that was her own if she chose to value it beyond the price of an optic.—I spoke in favour of my friends unchangeable love.

“ Emma will not observe your eye, my dear Charles, for her heart is true metal to those she loves, or who require her care; therefore, your optics will only increase her pity and affection;

but this let me say, that the most indulgent tenderness on your part can never repay Emma for her conduct to us all during the time of her probation."

"I am sure of it, I know it," cried Charles, in ecstasy, "but don't allude to it, or I can never sleep this night. Tell me of Mary and old Drinkwater; is he as lamblike as ever?"

I made no reply: I left my mother to answer the question; she was generally skilful in retreating from a disagreeable subject.

"Mary is not very strong, but the doctor has been ill, and Mary's attendance has not strengthened her: you will see her to-morrow, perhaps, on her return from Bradford."

"That I shall do certainly, but you have not replied to my question."

"What question, my dear?"

"Is old Drinkwater as lamblike as ever?"

My mother looked foolish, and then serious, but Charles was waiting her reply and looking very determined to be answered according to the truth, so it was in vain to dissemble.

"Mary does not find gout a sweetener of the temper, Charles; but long confinement affects the spirits; every one feels that."

"I understand you, mother; Mary has been a sacrifice. I have often feared so. How are the Langhams—any family coming?"

“Sir James has every other blessing,” replied my mother, “and there must be a bitter drop in every cup. He is very fond of children, but at present that boon is denied him ; they are very quiet at this time, and have no one staying with them.”

In such local chat we passed the evening. Charles had to learn the particulars of Captain Bates’s death, and I knew he would be anxious to hear the facts connected with my unfortunate marriage ; therefore I departed early to my room, and left him to a long *tête-à-tête* with my mother. I heard their voices below to a late hour, and I could distinguish some long strides, which were always the customary demonstration of emotion on the part of Charles. Doubtless he was agitated at the recital of my unhappy lot, and the indignities I encountered.

The following morning, when I descended to breakfast, I was surprised to find Charles quietly seated by my mother with no appearance of hurry in his movements. He was despatching an egg calmly, and he rose to embrace me as I entered. This was excellent feeling ; for we had always irritated and offended each other in my single days ; but Charles respected and loved me in my adversity ; my short career in matrimony, its distressing scenes and termination, obliterated all remembrance of past folly and temper, and his morning salutation evinced the sympathy he felt in my

sorrows, and the oblivion of my former transgressions. I felt the kindness conveyed in his affectionate manner; but I could not trust myself to notice it. I affected to tax him with indifference towards his future prospects.

“ Charles, you are a recreant, a craven knight, a poor, forsworn lover. Who ever saw a hero return to his beloved as you are doing! Who ever beheld a lover coolly eating an egg within twelve miles of his fair one, after eighteen months’ absence ?”

“ You know nothing of the matter. I have taken a fancy into my head to be chaperoned by you : therefore, when your breakfast is ended, we will set off together. I must have some one to make an affidavit that I am Charles Vansittart his own self, or Emma may object to receive a fellow with a green shade and a couple of frightful eyes.”

“ Will you really wait for me, and escort me to Bradford, Charles ?”

“ To be sure, that was my intention ; or where should I have been at this moment, young woman ?”

I could not withstand an attention so marked on my brother’s part. To wait some hours for my society, when his heart was at Bradford ; and for me too, who had never sought to be agreeable ! Tears trickled down my cheeks, and my head sunk

upon my bosom. Charles saw my agitation, and tried to divert it.

“ I am quite sure Emma will turn away in horror, and she will not receive a fellow with eyes like two half-blown field poppies. Most women, I know, would turn in disgust from me ; but I believe her to be really attached to me from better motives. As the time draws near, though, I feel rather queer. Does it alter me very much, mother ? ”

“ Not in my eyes, my son.”

“ Louisa, does it alter me *very* much ? Do you think she will shudder at the sight of me ? I am sure I should love *her* if she had a wooden leg.”

“ I doubt that,” I answered, trying to smile.

“ Such accidents certainly dispel one’s ideas of angels, and bring down our ethereal notions to vulgar realities. A woman’s beauty is assuredly her stronghold ; it is the attraction so potent to our minds, that we bend submissive to its power, and plead its effects in apology for many sins. To deform its symmetry, is to dissolve its power. Now, with you, ladies, I believe character possesses the greatest influence, or a certain daring manner which pleases the imagination ; for many an ugly dog has been followed by women without a feature to recommend him to the eye ; and if my appearance offends Emma, I shall win her back with most approved impudence.”

“You are not alarmed, Charles, in your heart, so I will not keep you long from proving your power. Order the carriage I beseech you.”

We were not long on our road ; but the spire of Bradford church gave rise to many emotions on the part of Charles ; he became very nervous.

“I do not doubt Emma’s affection, for hers was not a nature to change : but I do pity the disgust she must feel at seeing me perfectly deprived of the sight of one eye, and both in such an awkward state of fermentation ; it quite damps my pleasure.”

“Nonsense, Charles, do not judge of us by your own nature ; if you men cannot compliment you cannot love ; we, on the contrary, love most where we pity.”

“It may be so, but I wish the interview was over, that I might know exactly her thoughts and feelings : her first look will be every thing ; I shall know in an instant what effect I have upon her heart.”

“Not quite, Charles ; your fears will magnify sorrow into disgust ; and if Emma grieves for you, you will suppose she is mourning over her own withdrawn affection. You are too nervous to judge rationally.”

“We shall see,”—and Charles relapsed into silence ; but the flush upon his cheek told how much he dreaded the first meeting. We drove up to the

door. Henry and Charlotte were instantly before us. Henry accosted us with congratulations of delight. He shook my brother warmly by the hand. "My dear fellow, a thousand welcomes ! but what's the matter with your eye ?"

"There," said Charles, impatiently ; "my eye is the devil ; every body exclaims upon the sight of my poor optics." He passed on to Charlotte.

"How are you, my pretty one, and your two chickens ? I am very well, so don't *you* ask about my eye—where is every body I wish to see ?"

"Mr. Brereton and Emma are walking, they will be returning soon ; but till that happy moment arrives, stand before me, Charles, and let me peruse your lineaments."

"You shall peruse me by the hour, Charlotte, but not now. I am miserable till I have seen Emma, and ascertained her feelings towards me. She may consider me too much like one of the Calendars in the Arabian Nights to endure my presence, and her absence makes me very nervous—I wish our first meeting was over."

"My dear Charles," said Charlotte, in her soft conciliating tones, "you cannot suppose Emma's love was exclusively directed to your eyes."

"Human nature, Charlotte, human nature ! I was once an object upon whom a woman's eye might rest with pleasure, but how can I say she

may be able to love me now ? I know she would try to imagine me the being I once was, but it must be sad work to tutor the mind into believing such an eye as mine any thing but a disgusting blemish."

"But your impudence, Charles ;" quoth I, "where is your stock of impudence, which is to perform wonders ?"

"Don't plague me now ; let me talk on. If she distastes my poor eye, and turns from me with loathing, I shall only say, ' Farewell, Emma, and may you marry a man who will admire you half as much with his two great staring eyes as I would have adored you with my humble twinkling light.' "

Charles suddenly stopped in the middle of his speech, for the sound of footsteps approached, and the door opened to admit Mr. Brereton and his daughter. It was a moment and a scene of strong interest. Charles appeared rooted to the spot ; his eye was fixed upon Emma, as if it would start from its socket, but the agitation of his mind, combined with the fear of creating disgust to a beloved object, closed the power of speech, and arrested every faculty. Emma, astonished and alarmed by the silence, cast down her eyes, and remained stationary at the doorway ; no movement caught her regards, no sound reached her ear implying delight at her presence. Both remained as if struck by the

wand of an enchanter. Mr. Brereton looked at each person in turn, and at once discovered the cause of my brother's emotion : his sonorous voice broke the spell in an instant.

“ Captain Vansittart, I am glad to see you, and my daughter will not be less gratified because you are afflicted.”

The words of her father caught Emma's instant attention, and she raised her eyes towards Charles, who remained silently gazing upon her. The affectionate girl beheld her lover, and marked the shade which covered the remains of his once brilliant feature. In an instant her heart leaped towards him, and, forgetting our presence, she flew forward, and was clasped in his arms—“ My dear Charles !” she murmured.

We left them to renew their vows and affection unnoticed, and the morning was passed in visiting Charlotte's school arrangements and nursing the children. After dinner, I told Emma all Charles had suffered in the idea of displeasing her taste. She smiled.

“ Charles cannot know the extent of my love for him, for I never confided that secret to his keeping, nor shall I ever allow him a knowledge of such dangerous power. His dear eye is gone for ever ; but I don't know that I exactly remember its colour. I certainly did not fall in love with his eyes.”

“ You can pop in a glass eye, Emma, and vary the colour according to your fancy ; one week a blue eye, one week a dark one.”

“ I shall be very content with his own red eyes,” replied Emma ; “ for his heart is in health, and mine alone, and that is all I value ; it is all I ever valued.”

“ It is, indeed, the one thing needful, my dear Emma, and my fate may impress the truth upon your mind. An honest and true affection is the balsam of life, and without that basis upon which to rest the heart in its tribulation, all is chaos and misery.”

“ Do you think it supports Mary in her woes ?” said Charlotte.

“ No doubt : if her love for Drinkwater was not a principle she could not live with him ; duty might determine her to remain under his roof. Her health and happiness would be destroyed : but her affection now palliates and softens the rugged harshness of his temper, which could not be endured without a strong attachment. You observe how she clings to, and delights in, the gentle expressions which he so rarely uses to her now.”

We talked much of Mary and Lady Langham, their strict and long friendship, their marriage, and the difference of their present existence, one enjoying the most brilliant sunshine of happiness, while Mary remained in the dark shade of care and almost

solitary confinement. The Grange and the Hermitage were within a short drive, yet the communication had nearly ceased between the two houses. Mary could not leave the doctor, and he hated calls and calling; it was only at church that the friends beheld each other, and their intercourse was confined to a short dialogue as they walked together from thence to our house, after service. The withdrawal of Mary's society chilled our neighbourhood, and Captain Bates's loss was irreparable. It was impossible to renew the meetings which once were so full of interest to all but myself. Mary's smiling face was never seen, and Captain Bates's theory and song were never heard; and how were these things to be forgotten? Marriage and death broke into our circle, and their effects were rapid, for we were divided and subdivided ere two years had rolled over the first breaking up of our family party; and though some of its elements had reunited, the "whole" was rent asunder for ever. We had much moralizing over the past, but the gentlemen did not allow us a very long interval from their society. Charles was soon re-established at Emma's side, and the evening glided quickly by to hearts strongly knit together as ours were. Such delightful quiet scenes were but lately become dear and valuable to myself, and, perhaps, on that account, I enjoyed them with increased intensity of delight. In my short career of coquetry I had

never enjoyed the pure pleasure of an attachment in its holy calm, as Emma was then doing; blessed by her father and congratulated by her friends, she was accepting the reward of a severe probation, and looking forward to a future of domestic happiness. My eager grasp at fancied good, to which I sacrificed the attachment of all that was excellent, and the certainty of my tranquillity, was passed in horrible contention, slight, and repentance. Life seemed to have closed upon my affections; Emma's heart was in its spring-time of ardent attachment to a first and only love, and I prayed that her hopes might never be duped as mine had been. It was not likely such hope would be frustrated, for she walked uprightly in her path. I had followed a tortuous and unprincipled route.

Charles sunned himself in Emma's eyes, and forgot his own lately feared eclipse; his spirits were contagious, and mine became affected by his vivacity. Emma recovered her tone of mind, which had been depressed at first by agitation, and when the carriage was ordered, we were becoming vociferous in our glee. The formidable "old Brereton" was the youngest of the party, and I mused upon the change in his outward man. Dr. Drinkwater would not have recognised him.

Charles was mad with spirits, and talked all the way home. "Now he cared for nothing in this wide world since Emma did not mind his being

ugly and blind ; he should cut the army and marry in a month ; and if his mother had no objection to their living with her, they could manage extremely well, and be the happiest of the happy."

"Nay, my dear Charles," I remarked, "do not fancy I mean to be omitted in your plans ; the income which I enjoy, and which has never yet caused me an hour's happiness, as far as individual happiness is concerned, may return peace to my heart when it promotes that of others. I never deserved poor Mr. Ellis's bequest, for I was a bitter potion to his worthy nature ; and when it only won for me a husband who disliked and despised my character, and wasted my substance in sin, surely I may say it brought down a heavy vengeance upon me, and has requited the misery I caused Mr. Ellis in his latter days. No ! take it, Charles, and be happy, and do not let a false feeling deter you from accepting it. It will not make me happy, but I shall rejoice to see you and Emma enjoying the reward of good actions which have never gilded my turbulent life."

Charles was overcome by this offer, which I uttered in sincerity, and which was not spoken without many tears. For some moments he did not reply, but I felt myself in his embrace, and knew we were united at last in bonds of brotherly and sisterly love. At length he spoke calmly and for a short period his spirits were quelled.

“Many years of error, Louisa, are forgotten when the mind sorrows and repents for evils committed ; but do not think I will take advantage of its liberality. I will come to you when I really am out at elbows for a trifle to botch up a hole with, and my visits may come tolerably frequently, but I decline accepting your income or any part of it. You will marry again, and I hope happily ; you have plenty of time before you ; but should that sigh and shake of the head mean perpetual widowhood, you may provide for my children if they behave well, but I will not be a party concerned in the matter. I have enough, and Emma is not expensive ; but we thank you all the same, my dear lady, and I salute you in both our names.” A warm and affectionate kiss closed his speech, and an eager shake of the hand ; after which he resumed his own thread of discourse.

“Emma said exactly what you supposed she would, when I asked her if she could still look upon her old lover, without thinking of the Calendars or Belisarius : she was ashamed of my suspecting a change of feeling in her, and her anxiety was all for myself. She only hoped I should find her companionable enough to amuse me by her resources should the disorder affect my right eye, and she never dwelt upon the annoyance of dragging a blind husband after her through this weary

world. Can I ever repay her devotion, dear creature?"

"Yes, you can, Charles: be indulgent and gentle to her, and do not repay her affection with harshness. Save her from the wretched pangs I endured when I asked for kind treatment, and was answered in scorn; when I prayed for affection, and yet met with cold derision: save her from this, Charles, and she will be richly repaid for her anxious tenderness."

"My poor Louisa, you were sadly mated, and it is well I was abroad and in ignorance of your misery: by the Heavens above, the wretch should have rued our meeting, and I would have torn you from his d—d presence!"

"It is all over now," I replied, "only memory brings before me the distress I took such pains to secure, and my poor Emma's gentler nature would sink under unkindness: never speak harshly to her, Charles."

"I should be a brute to give her pain," replied Charles, with great feeling; "there are fellows who cannot value a woman, but they are of coarse minds, and such brutes do occasionally win a wife who deserved a better fate: Emma will never meet opposition in me."

"I believe it, Charles, because you were always good-natured to your sisters: you and myself

sparred now and then, but I must do you the justice to say, I was always in the wrong."

"Well, no self-reproach; we did as well as we could, and we must try to grow wiser and better as we grow older. Langham is now happy with his wife, and I shall imitate him. I fear Mary is not so enviable: I never liked that unequal match, but the old boy's temper was considered quiet at that time."

"We all believed so; but it must have existed, and it must have been known to all who were at the Grange: the servants, perhaps, were the only sufferers from his temper, as his retired habits prevented much society from entering the precincts of that dull place."

"We will go there to-morrow: my first visit was to my bride, of course, but my second trip shall be to poor Mary, and I shall see how things are going on."

The following day we set off to the Grange earlier than usual, for Charles was anxious to see Mary and the Langhams, and then proceed again to Bradford. Bradford would be the haven of his rest till he could carry Emma to his own home, and we should not be able to enjoy his society till the delights of courtship had sobered down into the calm stillness of matrimony. We arrived at the Grange before the conclusion of their breakfast and the doctor was not expecting the sight of a

human being, till eleven o'clock prepared him for my mother's daily visit. As Charles and myself advanced silently towards the hall-door, we heard the doctor's voice in its loudest key.

"I tell you, you are all fools, and your mistress as bad as any of you. Take it down, I say, take it down, and be d—d to you!"

We heard Mary's mild voice offering some explanation, the nature of which did not reach us, but her husband roared out, "What's that to you? the devil is in you all to plague and worry me; go along every one of you, and be d—d; I'll tear it down myself."

There was deep silence for a moment, when a loud noise was heard, as if heavy weights had fallen from some height upon the marble floor of the hall, and at that moment we advanced to its open doorway. An argand lamp had been suspended from the ceiling, and its erection having offended the doctor's taste, he had dashed it upon the ground in a moment of fury; and there it lay, an offering to, and victim of, wrath. Mary stood with clasped hands, as if deprecating the rash movement of her husband: Jenkins and the coachman were making a speedy retreat from the scene of action; a crutch, the instrument of wrath, lay extended by the ruins of the shivered lamp, and the genius of the storm was standing, like Marius upon the ruins of Carthage, astonished at the devastation around him.

His lips were pale, and his eyes were inflamed with ire : his whole person was a sad illustration of disease contending with violent passions.

Mary was the first who observed us, and bursting into tears she flew into her brother's arms. The doctor was confounded at being detected in such a stretch of power by Charles, and still more annoyed by my presence, who had for some time acted as a severe censor : it was useless making any apology for the scene, however, and the doctor wisely forbore any attempt at justification ; he only observed the " what's-his-names " were enough to provoke an angel, and we were ushered into the " cell," where their breakfast was yet untouched. Mary's hands trembled as she prepared the tea, and her voice faltered as she spoke her pleasure in again seeing Charles, but it was evident the emotion proceeded from a deep source of inquietude ; it was not the agitation of pleasurable thoughts. Breakfast proceeded and ended in silence, with the exception of a few short questions and answers between the doctor and Charles. Mary was endeavouring to master increasing emotion, and dared not trust her voice or looks : she kept her eyes fixed upon the teacups before her ; and I was too indignant to enter into conversation with any one who could speak harshly to Mary. The doctor appeared relieved when breakfast terminated, and he could escape into one of the dark holes designated the

“justice-room,” where he usually gave orders to Jenkins, and showered abuse upon his work-people. We were then left together to breathe and speak freely. As the doctor closed the “cell” door, Mary’s feelings burst forth in a violent fit of weeping, and Charles and myself knelt on either side to soothe her with affectionate words and embraces. Charles was very earnest with her to leave the Grange.

“Only say the word, Mary, and I will quietly manage your return home : you cannot persuade me with that withered face and figure that you are well or happy, and I will not allow you to be the victim of that tyrannical fellow. I am here to see justice done to all, and you, Mary, shall not endure this strife.”

“Oh, come to us, Mary,” I cried, throwing my arms round her, “come to us ! Have I not enough for all ? Let us live together, and be in peace, for there is no happiness with violence. Come home to us, dear Mary.”

Mary was some time regaining sufficient composure to reply to our supplications ; but when she spoke, it was to decline our interference.

“You are both very kind—very affectionate ; but I married, and must abide the results. I am not happy, I confess. Dr. Drinkwater frightens me to death with his violence, but he is not personally unkind. Would you have thought, Louisa, the doctor could be so violent ?”

“Do not remain with him, Mary ; it will kill you.”

“I must not leave him. Everybody would blame me, and I love him in spite of his frightful exhibitions of temper. I think I could better bear it if he did not bawl so loudly ; but that tone paralyzes me, and my alarm offends him, and increases his violence—no, I cannot leave him, Charles, for I should reproach myself everlastingly. He never has treated me as you were treated, Louisa. You were right to fly from Captain Thelwal, but I have not such indignities to resent. If Drinkwater would only cease to be violent, I should love him so dearly.”—Poor Mary wept again her husband’s irritability ; but it was a relief to unburden her mind.

“I am better since we can talk freely upon the subject. For a long time I concealed all my alarms, hoping no one would suspect my husband’s infirmity ; but it soon became too powerful not to be well known to my dear mother’s acute perception, and I know it was that suspicion which brought her so regularly to me. I do not think at that time I could have existed without her daily presence, for I had been so used to kindness and gentle tones, that Drinkwater’s voice struck me dumb, and he often thought me sulky when I was only unhappy. I do not care so much about myself, but I am shocked to think what servants will

report, and they are every one going away next week ; even Jenkins leaves us ; and what can I do alone to make Gideon comfortable ? It quite weakens and disorders me."

This was indeed a wretched state of things, and we could only confer upon the easiest mode of softening the combined grievances. Charles had expedients for the whole affair.

" Mary, I was going to Bradford to-day, but I shall renounce that pleasure till to-morrow. When your comfort is ascertained, then I will think of myself ; but now hear me. It is not wise to allow Drinkwater a permanent residence anywhere ; a house or property of any kind is an interest which only affects his temper, and your plan is to carry him from pillar to post to amuse his mind.

" My dear Charles, I shall never be able to persuade him to move."

" Nonsense, Mary, he will move when there is no one to cook his dinner, or lift him up stairs in his attacks. I will manage that part of the business. Get him to Bath, and he will be enlivened by the old women and card-players, while your time will be less occupied by airing flannel, and trembling under these explosions. I must despatch a messenger to Bradford, and we will dine with you to-day, and taste your ragouts, before the cook departs. I will just speak to Drinkwater."

" Charles, perhaps Gideon is not quite himself,

but I dare not enter the justice-room to tell him you are going away. I really dare not encounter him."

"My dear, the justice-room is the very ground upon which I could wish to meet my honoured relation; I am going to stir him up. Come with me, Louisa, and see the tiger in his lair."

I accompanied him to the justice-room: Charles gave three unconscionable loud knocks upon the door with his knuckles. "Come in" was spoken in a growling tone, and we entered accordingly. Charles began upon the spot.

"My good fellow, we are all coming to dine with you to-day, and let me have a bottle of your famous port to put me in mind of the Continent. Mary does not look very well, and you are in the suds, so a family party will be beneficial."

"We shall be very happy to see you," said the doctor, in the gentle tones of bygone times.

"Very well, your hour is four I remember: but I say, doctor, you can't expect gout to be got rid of by solitary confinement; why don't you move about as Pellew did, who ranged about the country, and was better the moment he got rid of his house and establishment? Servants, sir, worry a man to death."

"D—n them," muttered the doctor, "they drive a man crazy."

"Send them away, and shut up your house, my

dear sir ; travel about a little, and you will find the benefit of air and change of scene as Pellew did."

"Remember how Malvern agreed with you, doctor," I gently insinuated.

"Ay," continued Charles, "but breaking up an overpowering, tiresome, establishment, is the main point, if you had courage to part with the people."

"Oh ! d—n them, they all quit next week," said the doctor, indignantly.

"Is it so ? then the business is done : away with them, and cumber yourself no more with such plagues ; they try one's temper worse than a fit of gout. Quit Gloucestershire for a few months, and move about.—Go to Bath for a season."

"Stanhope is there," I added.

"Everybody is there," said Charles. "Mary looks consumptive, too, and requires change ; we can talk it over this afternoon, and I will tell you how Pellew managed it. I congratulate you upon getting rid of your servants at any rate ; they are the troublesome part of a removal. Well, now we will go home."

The off-hand fearless manners of Charles seemed to operate upon the doctor's nature, and restore its tone ; he followed us like a lamb into the hall, and even hobbled to the great gate in our train. Mary rejoiced in his tranquil appearance, and her

sorrows were forgotten; she could now examine Charles. "My dear brother, how came you by these eyes!"

"Never mind my eyes; they were once a sore subject; but as Emma says she loves me the better for them, I care nothing about the matter. I have lost one eye, Mary, and the other is comical looking; but I am told the sight is sound, and Emma is content to be admired through one eye. I shall leave the army, of course, and devote myself to rural pursuits."

"And of course you turn Benedict?"

"As soon as I have sold out, and got my mother's consent to bring Emma home to plague her. We are now off to the Hermitage."

"I seldom see Anne now," sighed Mary.

"There are some little drawbacks in matrimony," said Charles; "but we would rather earn experience than benefit by counsel. I expect a thousand disagreeables myself, but, like the crowd, I am speeding towards Hymen; I see his torch inverted, but on I go, and we can compare notes, Mary, and when you sigh I will groan."

We parted at the gate, and Mary slowly returned towards the house with the doctor. Charles looked after them. "Now that old rascal shuts up the poor girl, and makes her life a misery without improving his own. Can you believe the fellow's temper such a nuisance—when he has such a complying little soul to live with!—he ought to be

horsewhipped, and as sure as he lives he shall get one from me, if he plagues Mary. D—n such placid dogs, who look as if they had nothing in them but milk and water, yet can worry a wife to death with their brutal disposition. This shall not last; if he does not quit the Hermitage, my sister shall not remain there.”

“Mary will never quit him, Charles.”

“I do believe some of you like a tyrant better than a quiet fellow; but I will not see her dying by inches under alarm and anxiety. It never was a natural sort of match. Young women are not aware what they undertake, when they fancy marrying a gouty fellow twenty years older than themselves. It always annoyed me.”

“Young ones are as difficult to manage, Charles. Marriage must be a lottery, since we cannot arrive at a knowledge of each other’s disposition till repentance is useless.”

“I suppose so; but at any rate Emma’s mind is open to our inspection; I think I have no need to fear there.”

“Emma was severely tried, and you might judge by the daughter how she would fulfil her duties as a wife. It is rarely such opportunities are afforded of ascertaining principles, and you may congratulate yourself on having fallen upon good ground. The Breretons were a good stock, Charles, and I begin to think much of stock.”

CHAPTER VIII.

CHARLES had certainly many requisites which compose the character and ensure the success of a popular speaker. He possessed a daring manner of arguing, a pertinacity of purpose, a vein of playfulness, and command of temper and language which convinced or silenced his adversary, and amused his audience. At the Grange he effected the three points in a masterly style, and the doctor retreated before his fluency as a general retires with his forces when the enemy pours down fresh and vigorous troops upon exhausted foes. To be sure, the knowledge of being deserted by his people was a powerful inducement to give way to the pressure within, and the doctor gradually consented to be amused and relieved by a short absence from home, and the charming variety of a Bath trip. Charles laid plans and disposed of us all in a few minutes after the doctor's consent was wrung from his hesi-

tating lips. "How were they to get their what's-his-names together?"

"That must be the ladies' affair," replied Charles, "they understand packing better than you or I do: I always ram my clothes into a box like stowing away wool, and my things come out in a shocking state. You will require nothing but your clothes; that's the comfort of Bath, and I have arranged everything in my own mind for you. My mother and Mrs. Thelwal will run down to Bath and take a good house, and then you two will join them. I shall follow as soon as I can with Emma, but the deuce a bit do I stir till she is fairly my wife, or old Brereton may change his mind, and rattle her away from me again. My mother and Louisa will set off to Bath on Monday; wont you, my mamma?"

"I will cheerfully do anything that gives my children pleasure," replied our affectionate parent.

"That then is settled, Drinkwater; and I will see to your house being closed properly, and a snuffy old woman established in the kitchen after your departure. The Langhams said this morning they would pay Bath a visit if you resolved upon going; so the family party will be snugly settled there in a short time. I cannot think old Brereton will keep me dancing long after his daughter: I shall tell them my only eye wont bear straining, and I must be despatched quickly."

We had some conversation upon the shortness

of our time for preparation, but Charles cut every objection extremely short.

“What do you require time for? Can’t you put your finery into a couple of boxes in an hour? You women take more time to pack up a parcel of petticoats than a whole regiment require to start for Gibraltar. I’ll close the shutter, and set the maids scouring.”

We had nothing to oppose to such active assistance, and therefore it was finally arranged we were to quit Gloucestershire the following Monday; and upon our writing to acquaint Mary of our ability to receive her, she was to join us with her husband. I knew Charles had the kindest reasons for hurrying his plans; he wished to withdraw Mary speedily from her present thralldom, and as the doctor’s health could never be depended upon, it was wise and expedient to move during the present period of sunshine.

Mary rejoiced in her prospect of emancipation: the Grange was indeed a prison-house which abounded in dark images, but it could not afford one sprightly idea to cheer her long hours of seclusion. The doctor’s violence frightened away the joyous tone of her mind, and her fond affection was rapidly changing into terror. She felt assured Bath would allow her many pleasures which the Grange denied: she would see her friends much more frequently, and if the Langhams were there, she must

inevitably meet Anne daily and hourly ; as her neighbour in the country they rarely exchanged calls. She must be essentially benefited by the change.

Upon my own account, change of place affected me little. I might as well be in Bath as in the country, if all my friends were round me : their society was all I coveted, and their pleasure was my law. My own crushed hopes I must carry with me to each abiding-place.

I drove to Bradford, to take leave of Charlotte in her joys, and Emma in her uncertainties. Old Brereton, as he was always styled among us, allowed his daughter to prepare immediately for her nuptials ; his argument struck most harmoniously in tune with Charles's wishes, as both came instantly to the same sound conclusion, " If they were both of one mind, and determined to enter matrimony, the sooner they set about it the better, since come it must." Charles most heartily responded his " Amen !" to old Brereton's observation, and in a fortnight Emma was to begin her career as a wife. I wept over her and blessed her when I bade her adieu. " Emma," I said, " there was a period when my selfish heart valued only my own amusement, but now it is bound up in my friends' well-doing. Of all beings, you were once my fear and dislike ; but I do not now think even Charles can deserve you. May your life be free from

sorrow such as I have endured, and may a thousand blessings rest upon you !—Charles, watch over her, and value the treasure you are going to possess.”

“ To be sure I will,” replied Charles, as he took my friend from my arms, “ to be sure I will ; and though I must be a Cyclops instead of an Argus, I promise you my one poor eye shall mount guard over her : but do not set her weeping, for as I am to share her joys and sorrows, scalding tears will burn up my only optic.”

I did not lengthen a painful scene : my recollections were bitter, but they were not to cast their shade upon Emma’s happy anticipations : we parted after many embraces, and in the hope of being soon reunited ; she would then form a part of our home circle, and be my sister by blood as well as in affection. Charlotte must be too happy at Bradford to be interesting ; Emma was yet an object of speculation. Charles was to remain a fortnight at H— after his marriage, and then, if we had room for them, he was to bring Emma to us. We regretted not being at the wedding-feast.

“ Never mind these misfortunes,” cried Charles, with his usual insouciance ; “ Mary’s comfort is more essential to our repose : hang me if I could make love pleasantly while the poor soul was shrinking at Drinkwater’s oaths. I should like to have had my mother near Emma at her turning off,

we cannot control events ; you will both be near poor Mary."

The Langhams and Mary talked over the plan after church on the Sunday : both parties approved Charles's arrangement. Sir James was pleased at the idea of meeting in Bath ; he thought the country at all times a little dull, and he was sure Anne would enjoy the change, and his mother would be delighted to have them in the Crescent with her. " I think," said Lady Langham, smiling, " Sir James has not forgotten Mrs. Stanhope ; the Hermitage has not been so lively since that unfortunate introduction."

" And a very nice sort of woman, Anne : I liked her oddity amazingly ; but don't be jealous. Mrs. Vansittart, you will be quite young again ; and Mrs. Thelwal will be beset by admirers."

" My follies are over, I hope, Sir James ; don't allude to new disasters."

" Not a bit : every one must have a few annoyances before they settle, and you are looking handsomer than ever. I shall have to walk before you with a flapper to keep off admiring eyes."

" Well, do you be my guide, then, and I shall come to no harm."

" Will you accept me as your guide, and bind yourself to follow my directions ?"

" Yes, that I will, providing always Lady Langham sanctions the counsel."

" To be sure—what am I without Anne ?"

“ Agreed, then.”

“ Here are many witnesses to prove our *liaison*, Mrs. Thelwal, so the compact must be fulfilled ; you really set off to-morrow, then ? Where is Vansittart ?”

“ At Bradford, but he returns to-night.”

Lady Langham and Mary were in close conversation, till the watch of the latter warned her to depart : at half-past two precisely the doctor took his walk, and Mary must be at his side. Poor Mary ! Bath must relieve her from much of this.

“ My dear Mrs. Drinkwater,” said Sir James, as he escorted her to her carriage, “ you have ruined your husband with indulgence.”

Mary faintly smiled. “ If I have done so, it is too late to repair my error ; but I think I advise every young lady to be firmer than I have been.”

Sir James Langham withdrew with her ; at his return, he spoke most feelingly of her worth and excellence : she was indeed a fair and invaluable gift given to a brute who could not estimate her value ; but in the meditated removal there would be much to ameliorate her situation ; she would be surrounded by those she loved, and she would not have the cares of a household to irritate him and alarm herself. Lady Langham hoped everything from my brother’s happy arrangement, and she had promised to follow quickly upon her steps : thus then all parties were pleased, and our separation

would be but temporary. There must be a speedy, and it was hoped, a happy re-union.

The following morning we were early on our road towards Gloucester, and in the evening we were settled in our old house in St. James's-square, which we fortunately found untenanted: this was peculiarly lucky, for we resumed our tradespeople, and almost our old habits, by the force of association. As we sat down to tea after a few trifling preparations, I unconsciously looked for the appearance of the doctor and Stanhope, who had once so regularly attended the meal in former days.

Mary and the doctor joined us three days after our arrival; and then I informed the Stanhopes by note of our movements. They were with us in less than an hour after receiving my communication. Mrs. Stanhope was as intimate with my mother and Mary after the first introduction, as if their acquaintance had been of many years' standing; she therefore lost no time in chilly common-place discourse, and Stanhope had made several engagements with the doctor in the first ten minutes of the interview. Mrs. Stanhope called them to order.

"Don't forget you are married, gentlemen; you are making several appointments, please not to forget you have each an incumbrance. Where are you going to drag the doctor to-morrow, Mr. Stanhope?"

"Into the gardens, Esther, and Mrs. Burton will accompany us."

“Very well; we will amuse ourselves till you return, and then we will dine together in Camden-place *en famille*. Mrs. Drinkwater, you must give up your husband to Stanhope and my mother: they will toddle together, while we work or walk; but we must leave you now, as we are engaged for the day.”

“But Esther — Esther!” cried Stanhope, “it wants half an hour to three o’clock.”

“So much the better, we shall not have to walk home so fast, and you must fetch my mother from old Mrs. Norton’s, you know.”

Mrs. Stanhope rose to depart, and Stanhope tore himself from a dissertation upon gout to attend her summons; Mrs. Stanhope mechanically took the lead, because she had been accustomed to act so long for her mother. Stanhope, as mechanically followed her lead, because his harness sat lightly and agreeably. Some men like to have a dominant spirit superintending their movements, provided it does not gall their whims, or chafe them in the enjoyment of their hobby. Mrs. Stanhope’s whole heart and attention were given to her husband and mother, in every action she considered their comfort alone, and when her manner appeared most abrupt and uncouth, it was veiling some plan for their amusement. Stanhope had the good sense, or easiness of temper, to enjoy the excellence of her character, and overlook its want of refinement.

Mrs. Stanhope would always be designated the "grey mare;" but Stanhope did not object to the title; he laughed as heartily as any one at the charge brought against his lady, and whispered the epithet to her amused ear: she was never at a loss for good-humoured replies to such attacks.

"I suppose I am the grey mare, Mr. Stanhope; but I fancy those who ridicule the idea are the hen-pecked, who, like sparrows, pursue and hunt down a brother in distress: while we are happy, never mind the laugh of ridicule which proceeds from bad feeling, and is only felt by the weak. We can only be happy: let us enjoy ourselves without prying into causes, and so tell me who you mean to dine with you to-day, for I always order soup at Melan's."

It was a blessed thought of my brother's in recommending Bath to the doctor: he was now full of little bustling engagements with Stanhope, in which Mrs. Burton always made a third party, and Mary was free to enjoy perfect relaxation of mind, and the society around her. It was amusing to observe the regularity with which Stanhope came to us each morning with Mrs. Burton under his arm to escort the doctor to some stupid sale, or a lounge in the gardens: the change was apparent in every movement of the doctor's face. Instead of swearing at Jenkins, he was remarking pleasantly upon the old gentleman he daily met in Milsom-street,

ten times more crippled than himself, and in lieu of venting his violence upon poor Mary, they could tell each other their morning's adventures. Dr. Drinkwater was likely to recover in time his ancient title of "the good and quiet," but it was evident he must never more return to the trying scenes of country occupation.

Charles and Emma received my mother's blessing a month after our removal to St. James's-square. They remained with us a fortnight, during which time Charles effected many reforms, and Emma refreshed me with her gentle society. I was resolved to remain in perfect seclusion during the period of my mourning; I did not affect deep regret for a man who had so cruelly refused me his affection even to harshness, and who had treated me with so much indignity, but I would not allow the finger of remark to be pointed at a woman still young, and, if my friends spoke truly, improved in beauty. I was content to visit only Mrs. Stanhope, whose strong sense levelled every passing affectation, and made her very valuable to those who sought her mind for its ore of excellence, undismayed by the ruggedness of the external surface. With her I passed many agreeable hours, astonished at my long indifference to worth of character, and while Emma remained with us I had not a wish to change the serenity of my feelings. While we

walked and talked together, I enjoyed the perfect felicity of unbounded confidence, and I was only recalled to a sense of my selfish occupation of her time by Charles declaring his wife belonged to everybody but himself. They proceeded to visit Mr. Brereton, but not before Charles had advised the doctor to buy the house we occupied, and let the Grange for a couple of years.

“My dear fellow, this last month has made you grow young and handsome, and Mary will be jealous of you with Mrs. Burton, if you do not look sharp. Remain here, buy this house, and when Louisa gets off your hands, my mother and you will be the happiest creatures in the world. In spite of Lou looking so demure in that horrible cap, and black concern, she will slip through your hands before you are aware of it, and Emma and myself will take possession of my mother’s house till she quarrels with you. Now what have you all to say?”

We were sure any objection would be superseded by Charles in this his hour of argument, but we really had none to offer: the arrangement met all our wishes, and the doctor boldly declared “he was perfectly satisfied with his present situation, only he must employ the d—d what’s-his-names in the transaction.”

Charles begged the doctor to withdraw his

thoughts from the subject: if he himself superintended the business, would he be content simply to pay the necessary expenses?

“ Oh! I'll pay your account when you bring it in, only don't let me be worried by those fellows' letters and presence. A lawyer makes me sick with his cursed flaws and green bag.”

My futurity might be speculated upon by Charles, but he was not aware of the complete revolution which had taken place in my character. A simple disappointment might have urged me into a new career of coquetry, when time had healed the wounded heart, and left it free to form new hopes—but I had married. I had entered the state and tasted the misery of unrequited love, and the pangs of jealous affection. I had not deserved to be happy, but it was as true that I loved fondly, and my error was not towards the man I married. Released from my bondage, it was not likely I should again tempt fate, by forming another engagement, but Charles reasoned doubtless upon my inveterate love of admiration, which had so notoriously governed my actions. Alas! I had been in the school of adversity, and its iron rod had taught me the mean wickedness of an overweening vanity.

The Langhams were not long redeeming their promise of being in Bath shortly after Mary, and our party was now as complete as the nature of

things would admit. Mrs. Stanhope was delighted. "We are all very comfortable here," she said, as her sparkling eyes rested upon Lady Langham; "we fancied nothing could be more complete than our agreeable little meetings till you arrived, but you know your presence is a sort of feast which spoils our appetite ever after for plain fare."

How Sir James Langham enjoyed the popularity of his most excellent lady, and the gaiety of the Crescent! His kind nature delighted in hospitality, and sought its pleasure in good-natured communion with his fellow-creatures. We were all becoming converts to one opinion, that country society was very dull, that the large establishments connected with its comfort closed the door to frequent meetings, and consumed the gay spirits by its care and routine; and, more than all, the distance, however trifling, from one estate to another precluded the lively appointments which gilded our mornings at Bath. In London, people missed each other in the crowded streets, or a different circle of acquaintance claimed their leisure hours, but in Bath all was within compass: we walked together in the morning, and met in the evening at the party of a mutual friend. I quite agreed in this statement set forth by Sir James: my recollections of London were fearful visions from which I turned away in horror; my present hours were the first halcyon period of my existence, and it

would surround the scenery of Bath with everlasting verdure in my future reminiscences of the past.

Old Lady Langham renewed her acquaintance with our party under pleasing auspices ; she had ceased to give balls, for increasing age destroyed her ability to be gay, but her little *soirées* were delightful, and towards the close of the winter I again resumed my place in her apartments, but not as in the former time. My mourning had ended, but not the feelings which accompanied my widowhood. I was not a foreground object in a circle of Lady Anne O'Brien's magic formation *now*. I was not the daring Vansittart who rejected nothing with contempt but wholesome counsel, or admired aught save the wretched tinsel of a showy exterior. No, I was changed in head and heart, by the trials with which it had pleased Heaven to chastise me ; but I could not blame Charles for supposing my affections yet lingered over the formidable errors of my youthful singlehood ; he doubtless concluded

You may break, you may ruin the vase if you will,
The scent of the roses will hang round it still :

but it was not so with me ; I had received newly-acquired tastes from the friendship of Mrs. Egerton, of Emma Brereton, from my sister's affectionate love, from my mother's matronly care and sympathy ; and though error might admire and strive to imitate the light of virtue, yet really virtuous intentions would never lapse again into the

slough it had cast away with loathing. When therefore my habiliments and the symbols of sorrow were put aside, I did not quit the path I had chosen as my walk through future years. If I sometimes smiled upon the compliments and flowers which bestrewed the steps of the "lovely and rich Mrs. Thelwal," it no longer gave me pleasure ; and if my voice was heard in the circle laughing and catching the sportive jest, or retorting the lively repartee, it was because my spirit joyously revelled in home feelings and home affections, and had forgotten the vanity which caused its long debasement.

Mrs. Stanhope was threatened with an incident which was likely to create a rival even more engrossing than Mrs. Burton had found in her daughter's husband. He had soon exchanged the title of rival, for that of friend, and it would be difficult to determine at this time which person held the most prominent position in the old lady's heart : but now, a dearer because a more helpless claim was advancing its powerful attraction, and Mrs. Burton, in her own quiet way, complained of her approaching expectation. She alluded to it upon every occasion, and dreaded her own extinguished lights in very unequivocal terms to everybody.

"I am sure I am very sorry Esther is in the family way ; I suppose you know it, Mr. Phipps ?"

"Indeed, Mrs. Burton, I did not."

"Oh yes. sir. she expects in April. and I am

sure I cannot think what is to become of me when they are nursing the child. Mr. Paine, are you not sorry to hear Esther is going to be confined ?”

“ Why, indeed Mrs. Burton I have not thought much upon the subject, but I will be sorry if you wish it.”

“ Yes, Mr. Paine, I don’t like it ; I shall have no one to walk about with me while Mr. Stanhope is nursing the child, and Esther will have so many things to do, I shall be quite deserted.”

Mrs. Stanhope’s rhetoric had somewhat more effect in stemming the tide of Mrs. Burton’s affliction.

“ Well, mother, everybody increases their family sooner or later ; you know it happened to yourself, so you can’t complain of other people ; and instead of walking about so much, you must be useful, like all grandmothers, and nurse the child yourself.”

This was convincing argument, such as Mrs. Burton could understand, and it coloured her ideas with more vivid hues. She was heard soon after assuring Mr. Phipps she had quite got over her dislike to the thoughts of a grandchild. And she even told Mr. Paine she thought and hoped Esther would have a large family.

It was the beginning of a mild and genial spring when Lady Langham talked of returning to the Hermitage, and I gladly accepted her invitation to

revisit my old neighbourhood. I longed to be near Charlotte and Emma, and I quitted my mother now with less regret, as she had Mary and the doctor under her care, and the Stanhopes to exchange kindly offices with, in daily meetings. I therefore prepared to accompany the Langhams to the Hermitage. Old Lady Langham deprecated our departure, and Sir James cast a wistful eye upon the invitations which filled the ticket-basket. But Lady Langham sighed for her boudoir and her flower-garden—and a wish of hers was his ready devoir. The few days which preceded our journey we were to devote to agreeable people, and make the most of our time by living exclusively from home. Sir James Langham had two or three friends still lingering in Bath before they took flight for the Continent; and one became my professed admirer. Charlton Leigh was agreeable, and in my hours of mirth we bandied jokes, and applauded each other's sallies of wit, but my feelings towards him never warmed into love. He was good-looking, of good fortune, and good character;—all was “good,” but my heart refused to meet the affection he proffered me. Sir James advocated his friend in heart and deed, and endeavoured to improve my opinion of his merits, but it could not be;—the fancy will not be forced onwards in its flight by argument—and I entreated him to desist.

“Remember, Sir James, my folly is ended, and I am not seeking to hold a heart which I decline accepting. I cannot fancy Mr. Leigh, and no entreaty can make me marry a man I do not like. God help me, I suffered enough with the husband I did fondly love. Do not wish me to be the wife of a man I distaste. I like to talk with Mr. Charlton Leigh, but I shudder at the thought of considering him in the light of a husband, and pray do not make me hate him by advocating his suit.”

“I grant you may not care about Leigh at this moment, my dear Mrs. Thelwal, but does it follow that time will do nothing ?

“You are a woman, therefore to be wooed ;
You are a woman, therefore to be won.”

“I can reply nothing to your remark, Sir James ; I only assure you my regard for Mr. Leigh consists in being amused by his conversational powers ; and if he persists in asking for my affection, there is a lurking vein of Louisa Vansittart, still ready to resent persecution, which Mrs. Thelwal would fain repress.”

“But Anne has asked him to the Hermitage ; have you any objection to his accompanying us into Gloucestershire ?”

“None in the world ; but let me explain myself to you. I have so little love in my compo-

sition towards Mr. Leigh that I may probably be often observed chatting to him with my usual spirits; I cannot help it, if he is undisguisedly agreeable, which he can be in conversation:—but my very *insouciance* will prove my total want of sentiment, and if my manner is to be misconstrued, I would rather decline the visit, though I have looked forward to it with so much pleasure; do not let me again be taxed with heartless conduct, which I detest as deeply as I once pursued its dictates with eagerness.”

“ I understand you, Mrs. Thelwal, and respect your motives; I will acquaint my friend with your sentiments, and if Leigh still desires to be of our party, he will shape his own course, and answer for his own rashness: we cannot allow you to desert us.”

“ I shall always be glad to see and receive Mr. Leigh as a very pleasant acquaintance, but I can never change my opinion: there are many very agreeable men whom one cannot prevail upon oneself to love.”

“ But why do you so positively assert you cannot change, Mrs. Thelwal? I have known ladies heartily abuse gentlemen whom they have ultimately loved and married.”

“ That I can understand: to dislike or abuse a man, is to act upon a strong movement which may be softened by the change of manner, or effaced by

the attention of the offending object. I wish I only disliked Mr. Leigh, for then I might be reasoned out of foolish prejudices; but I really like your friend; I prefer his society to all the gentlemen who flutter round me: therefore my disgust towards matrimony with him must proceed from an innate distaste which I do not care to analyze. It is sufficient that I possess that distaste."

"I always said you were unaccountable creatures," replied Sir James, laughingly, "and I must refer you to Anne.—You and Susan Fortescue puzzle me, but if Anne tells me all these things are natural, I shall be silent, but I cannot think I shall be convinced."

"Yes, you will; men and women are very differently constituted."

"I suppose so; for if any woman had cared for me as Leigh does for you, I should have been in love with her directly, if she had squinted."

"You were wonderfully preserved for your present good fortune, Sir James."

This little dialogue took place at old Lady Langham's the evening previous to our quitting Bath, where a few friends had assembled to take their leave of Sir James and his lady. Charlton Leigh made one of the number; and his eye glancing at our *tête-à-tête*, drew him towards us. He smilingly inquired what abstruse subject was under our consideration; I hesitated a moment; Sir James Langham never hesitated in his life.

“ Why, Leigh, I am glad of your assistance, for I was getting worsted in the battle I have just fought.”

“ What was your ground of dispute, Langham ?”

“ Mrs. Thelwal protests she never argues against first impressions, and I maintained her opinion was unsound and untenable.”

Mr. Leigh took up Sir James Langham's views, and we were soon engaged in a playful discourse which amused the company, and made me forget Mr. Leigh was a discarded lover. Our debate grew more energetic and more lively ; Charlton Leigh shone in the contest : he had strength of remark, and a fund of drollery, which amused, while the mind was improved by his capacious argument. I delighted in his company when our wits were fairly running a race together ; it was only in his moments of sentiment that I withdrew from the agreeable sound of his voice, and fled the arena. We were this evening particularly interested in our debate, and perhaps the applause of the little circle contributed much to its prolongation, for a servant had delivered a card to Sir James Langham, and he had withdrawn from my side unnoticed. I was defending my position with increasing energy, when he re-entered the drawing-room in company with Lord Elford.

My eyes were turned towards the door when they entered arm-in-arm, and from that moment my ideas fled, and the words died away upon my

tongue. My sudden confusion and silence was observed by Charlton Leigh, and he seized my hand in fearful expectation that I should faint, but that was not the nature of my disorder. The surprise was startling, but I resumed a calm exterior; my heart beat almost audibly, but I required neither attention nor cold water; I only wished to be allowed to shrink back in silence and unobserved, but that was now impossible; I must continue my discourse, or draw down remark; and I pressed the former effort. I advanced an opinion which I had previously controverted, and my opponent smiled at the contradiction of my sentiments. I could not continue this warfare under present feelings, and Mary, guessing my real situation, came forward to my rescue.

“Your argument, Mr. Leigh, must be concluded, and I mean to separate combatants who, I am sure, remain steadily unconvinced by each other’s excellent reasoning. My dear Louisa, Anne wishes to see you when you are at liberty.”

I rose immediately, and took Mary’s arm.

“How glad I am you relieved me, Mary; I was becoming bewildered, and I would give worlds now to escape from the room.”

“Do not be discomposed, a few minutes will relieve you from awkward feelings, and all will pass over quietly. Let the interview take place without remark.”

I trembled, as I clung to my sister's arm, and proceeded with her towards Lady Langham. We passed Lord Elford in our passage up the drawing-room, and he came forward to salute Mary. They shook hands, and I believed he bowed to me ; but my eyes were fixed on the carpet, and all sounds became indistinct. I remember my hand was taken by somebody, and relinquished immediately ; but I saw and distinguished nothing. I was only sensible of being placed behind Lady Langham, where my confusion was unwitnessed, and when I raised my eyes, they rested upon Mary and my mother. I remained silently near them, trying to compose my thoughts, and gain an appearance, at least, of tranquillity ; but though my eyes were withdrawn, my mind was sensible of Lord Elford's movements, and I heard his voice distinctly conversing with his acquaintance. How those tones rested on my ear, and how forcibly did they remind me of all that had past !

Again he was near us. I heard his lordship address some remark to my mother, and again the ringing in my ears precluded any comprehension of their conversation. It was impossible to endure such a state of excited feeling, and I bent forward to catch Mary's eye. I meant to entreat her to take me home, but my lips could not sound the words. Her affectionate heart suggested the meaning of my dumb appeal, for she rose instantly, and

I heard her observe to my mother, my pale looks and still weakened health, which demanded early hours and repose. This produced a little bustle, and I was drawn into observation by our preparation to depart. Mr. Leigh came up to offer his arm and assistance, and I turned from him unconsciously towards Sir James Langham, who was standing near me. I heard Mr. Leigh's voice naming me, but I could not suffer him to lead me down stairs; it seemed as if my disgust acquired at that moment a two-fold increase, and as objects began to swim before my eyes with increasing agitation, I suddenly put my arm through that of Sir James Langham. "Take me," I said imploringly, "for I can neither see nor hear." I was soon withdrawn from the heated room, and the cool staircase somewhat relieved me. Sir James assisted me in silence to descend, for my eyes were full of tears, and my hands trembled perceptibly. I made some attempts at excusing myself.

"Don't mind my agitation, Sir James, but I shall never see Lord Elford without bitterly regretting the past, and he looks so kindly at us, after my ingratitude!"

A slight pressure of the arm gave me assurance of Sir James's sympathy, and sympathy from a man is always overpowering, because it is unexpected! I gave way to a burst of tears, and my heart opened its sorrow to his kind ear.

“ Well, God bless him ; he has forgiven me, though I shall never forgive myself. Tell Anne to come for me at her intended hour, for I shall not be ill, and the Hermitage will do me good now.”

Sir James did not reply, and I fancied him speculating upon women’s odd ways and capricious whims. My mother and Mary were behind, which hurried me in some degree forward, and I was handed into the doctor’s carriage. At that instant the lamp shone brightly upon Mary, who, to my horror and surprise, was escorted by Sir James Langham. I turned to my companion :

“ Who on earth are you whom I supposed to be Sir James ?” But the stranger bowed and quitted me, and I could not catch a glimpse of his face to discover to whose ear I had committed my remarks. I was extremely distressed : “ Mary, who have I been speaking to ? Sir James, tell me who led me down stairs ; I thought you were my companion, and I have said such things ! for Heaven’s sake tell me who was the gentleman.”

“ Nevermind, Louisa, so you have been escorted : was it Mr. Leigh ?”

“ No, no, I got out of his way, it is not Charlton Leigh, but I mentioned what I should not have done to a stranger ; no wonder he was silent : my dear Mary, you must have seen me take his arm, for you were by my side.”

“ I will tell you presently when we are at home ; but I must watch Gideon safe into the carriage, or he will make a false step : one, two, three steps, my dear Gideon ; there, you are safely deposited.”

A very few minutes whirled us into the square, but those few minutes were distressing to me : I had named Lord Elford to a stranger, and made him the depositary of my ingratitude towards him : how could I be assured my confidence would not be extended gratis through the Bath circles, and become an addendum to my former history ? It might also reach Lord Elford’s ear : it could not injure him in any one’s opinion, but no man cares to be ridiculed as a jilted forsaken swain. I was very much vexed about the affair, but it was too late to repair the error, and I could only rejoice I was leaving the place where I had so strangely committed myself. Mary entreated me to think no more about the circumstance, but it haunted my recollection.

“ You could not be more distressed, Louisa, if you had taken the arm of Lord Elford himself.”

“ I do not think I should be half so much annoyed Mary, if such a thing had happened.”

Mary smiled : “ Well then, Louisa, I shall not drive you to extremity if I tell you, that in your confusion, you took Lord Elford’s arm to conduct you down the stairs ; and whatever you may have uttered, is sacred to him alone.”

I seated myself in despair : my mother smiled at my unqualified surprise and vexation.

“I could have wished it otherwise, my dear child, but it was not possible to command circumstances. You were not aware you had turned to Lord Elford in your agitation, and taken his arm ; he was too polite to allow you to discover your error. Any remark you made was safe in his lordship’s keeping, and I am sure if you expressed any regrets connected with himself, it did honour to your heart, and would be sacred in his eyes.”

“But, my dear mother, he will never be quite sure the mistake was unintentional : I never, never can or will meet him again, and I would give worlds this wretched meeting had not taken place.”

“Do not give it too deep consideration, Louisa : it can be productive of no unpleasant consequences, and his lordship perhaps will think of it no more. You will return into Gloucestershire to-morrow, and if you fancy Charlton Leigh, this little embarrassing affair will be speedily merged in more interesting matter.”

“Not with Mr. Leigh, mother : I gave no encouragement to Mr. Leigh, for I shall never change my name again.”

“Oh yes, you will : you were very happy with him this evening.”

“Then I must speak to him no more, or I shall

be accused of trifling with feelings for which I have no interest. Mr. Leigh is a very pleasant person, but if I am supposed to mean the shade of a warmer sentiment, or if he persecutes me, I shall end in disliking a very worthy person. I shall never marry."

"Then abstain from conversing so exclusively with Mr. Leigh, Louisa, and avoid his attentions."

"I will do so. Don't let me again be guilty of ungenerous trifling, even unwillingly. I will never more argue with Mr. Charlton Leigh."

CHAPTER IX.

SPRING in the country is a feast to the soul : the violets were just sending forth their delicate odour and the fresh and beautiful green leaves of the polyanthus were telling of the earth's bountiful production, when we exchanged Bath for the shades of the Hermitage. I was happiest when I roamed alone for hours in the fresh exhilarating breeze, or sat in Lady Langham's tasteful boudoir, reading at the open window, inhaling the fragrance of the sweetbrier, and listening to the cawing of a distant rookery. In such hours of silent communion my mind enjoyed undisturbed repose, and my health was restored to its original tone : Lady Langham's cheerful conversation was always a fountain of inexhaustible delight, to which I could fly when meditation became painful, and Sir James was an invaluable ally, when I required his assistance in

my disputes with Charlton Leigh. In such scenes, combined with periodical trips to Bradford, and the frequent society of Charles and Emma, a month glided by in serenity; but the cloudless horizon became shaded with gloom to me, by the attachment of Mr. Leigh, whose resolution to vex me no more with supplication was forgotten in his increasing passion. I had decidedly declined driving, or riding out with him, ever since our arrival at the Hermitage, and I had often retired from conversation which trespassed on the border of sentiment, lest my speech should be misconstrued into encouragement; but my care availed little, when anxious affection watched every turn of my eye, and swelled the most trifling occurrence into groundless and deceitful matter of hope. In vain I besought him to consider my determination a final one: in vain I assured him, almost in tears, that his resolution to persevere would only offend and distress me: Charlton Leigh believed in the old maxim, that every woman might be obtained by patience and perseverance, and he had not acuteness enough on this subject to detect its fallacy with regard to myself. I began to feel extremely offended by his pertinacious attention. Sir James and Lady Langham allowed everything to take its own course, and affected ignorance of our proceedings, but I saw plainly enough I should have much

vexation ere I could disembarass myself from Mr. Leigh's provoking attendance. Our acquaintance must end abruptly and for ever, and I was only anxious that desirable event should be brought forward as gently, but as firmly and quickly as possible. Mr. Leigh furnished the opportunity but too easily. I was sitting in Lady Langham's flower-garden one morning, glad to escape from company, and meditate on my usual garden-seat, when he approached, and put to flight a host of retrospections. I was then thinking of Lord Elford, and the extraordinary manner in which we had twice met, since the dissolution of our engagement: I was bringing to mind his excellence, and the hateful ingratitude with which I had treated such sincere affection, an affection so valuable, so beyond price, now that I could judge of its merits through my own sufferings. I thought if I had but loved Lord Elford half as devotedly as I had worshipped Thelwal, what a life of happiness had been my fate. Ah! why did I blindly follow the dictates of vanity, and quit a prize in possession, to stake my hazard again upon the die. In such a mood, any society would have been unwelcome, but of all persons I least desired to behold Charlton Leigh: I rose to retire, for I disliked the interruption, but he entreated me to remain with him one quarter of an hour.

“ I cannot remain here, Mr. Leigh ; I wish to be alone, and you vex my very heart with your perseverance. Pray do not make me hate you.”

“ Hate me, Mrs. Thelwal ! would you hate a man for loving you through coldness and even unkindness ?”

“ I wish to hate no one, Mr. Leigh, but you try my patience severely. It matters little whether you offer love or indifference, since any offer is highly disagreeable, and I do confess I am astonished and offended at your undignified persecution.”

“ Good heavens, have I said anything to offend, or has my manner insulted you, when I have condemned myself to long and utter silence ?”

“ You have not spoken very lately, I grant, Mr. Leigh, but I cannot mistake your everlasting presence. A lady finds it very annoying to see a long face constantly before her eyes, when she has declared her objections, and your following me into my private wanderings provokes me to say what I could wish unspoken.”

“ But listen one instant to me.”

“ I will listen no more : I have listened till I am out of patience, Mr. Leigh.”

“ Your affections are disengaged, Mrs. Thelwal ; why may I not endeavour to win them ?”

“ They will never be yours, Mr. Leigh, if you were to kneel and implore for ever. I don't like

an imploring man ; the position is undignified ; but at any rate I cannot suffer this annoyance, and I shall quit this place till your visit is ended. I am not happy here."

Mr. Leigh's countenance changed, and his voice trembled ; I was sorry to give pain, but he had overstrained my patience, and I was weary of the perpetual infliction of his presence. At the present moment it was particularly annoying. I awaited his reply in silent irritation.

" Since my presence is odious, Mrs. Thelwal, I will offend your sight no more, but such feelings as mine demanded more courteous treatment." He turned to withdraw, but I thought of the pain I had given others—the pain I had endured myself in the cold, repulsive manners of Thelwal as a husband, and I caught poor Charlton's hand.

" Forgive me, forgive me ; do not ask me to love you, but forget I have said a harsh thing—anything inconsistent with the esteem and regard I really feel towards you. I beseech you to be content without a heart I cannot give, and look upon me as your sincerest friend. Say you are not angry or hurt, Charlton."

My words and manner had their immediate effect upon my lover, for the blood rushed again to his cheek, and he pressed my hand to his heart.

“ I know you never mean to be unkind, and I believe I have teased you with my presence, but if you knew the misery of resigning a dear hope while a chance of success remained to cherish its existence, you could not blame my perseverance. You have often told me you could not love, but when you smiled and argued with me, hope raised her head and promised such visions of happiness, that I could not struggle to repress them. But now be generous, dearest Mrs. Thelwal, and tell me truly ; will time, will unceasing exertions to please, ever elicit one spark of pity toward me ? Before you pronounce the dreadful refusal, look once more into your heart, and consider well the torture you are going to inflict !”

I paused : I did consult my heart, but not a thought was given to his suit : I could not mistake my feelings, and I told him so openly. Why should I have tried to deceive him or myself !

Mr. Leigh heard me very patiently : I spoke in firm and unhesitating tones, and I endeavoured to phrase my resolutions gently and politely, but I was compelled to speak truly, and he must bear with its purport. I told him I did not love him, and it was vain to ask for more than my good will. I implored him to leave me in peace, or allow me to retire to my brother's house while he yet remained at the Hremitage, since all further inter-

course must be painful on either side ; to myself, particularly distressing, for every action must be misconstrued by his anxiety, and I did not wish to be unkindly severe. I would put an end to all further recurrence of painful scenes by paying my brother a visit.

To this intention Mr. Leigh politely demurred : he had caused the wish to separate, and he should consider himself the banished one : Sir James Langham talked of running up to town for a day or two, and he would accompany him. He only besought me to forgive his perseverance, and think of him without disgust. I promised Charlton Leigh this poor and trifling return for so much attachment, and he quitted me in emotion which it pained me to witness.

I was again at peace, and free to enjoy the calm fragrance of the budding spring flowers, but my mind had been disturbed, and change of place was necessary : I therefore returned to my seat in Lady Langham's boudoir, and confided to her gentle ear my interview with Charlton Leigh, and his resolution to depart. My friend taxed me with coldness towards a very excellent young man, whose character promised the gentle qualities so indispensable to married happiness. I told her the exact state of my heart :

“ I honour Mr. Leigh for all the good qualities

you suggest, Lady Langham, but I cannot love him : I have no sentiment for Charlton."

"Never mind sentiment, Louisa ; you must be aware now, how little sentiment is requisite in matrimony, and how much more necessary is a kind heart, and affectionate disposition, such as your admirer possesses."

"Some women, Lady Langham, require a certain sentiment to produce the love which is requisite to induce marriage. I could not marry a man I did not love, and my unhappy marriage proved my feelings. I bore much with Thelwal, because I loved him. I parted from him because I could not endure dishonour ; but I never reproached him with anger, and his illness was a summons I could not resist ; but even then could I have borne the sight of Lady Anne, had not a strong affection led me forward ?"

"You had infinite sufferings, my dear friend, but those trials do not await you with Mr. Leigh."

"But I do not fancy him, Lady Langham."

"Still under the dominion of fancy," she replied, tapping my shoulder.

"No, not fancy ; but my nature must like strongly, and I do not like Mr. Leigh."

"You are not determined against a second marriage, Louisa, by your repugnance to Mr. Leigh !"

“ I cannot explain my feelings very distinctly, but your acuteness may detect them for me, Lady Langham. I do not say, I will not marry again : Heaven knows my married life was brief and stormy, and its tranquil pleasures are unknown to me ; but, if I do re-enter the state, it cannot be with Charlton Leigh, or any common-place good young man ; that expression is so often applied to the weak. I must be attracted by strong character : Thelwal’s accomplished arts caught my vanity, and seduced my better sense, but I will never again fall into that error. I must in future honour the character of a man I wish to marry ; but I am not fit for such a man now.”

I hesitated and coloured—Lady Langham did not observe my manner—I *think* she did not.

“ Why so, my dear Mrs. Thelwal ? why are you not equally attractive in your present softened and purified mind, with the wild recklessness of Louisa Vansittart ?”

“ I cannot tell ! The sort of man I could now fancy, if ever I married, might not care for a heart which had loved and suffered as mine has done. With my follies and wicked ungrateful conduct constantly gnawing at my heart, I am no longer the lively and joyous creature who won hearts, and could form hopes for futurity : besides, a widow—people have a prejudice against widows

and, indeed, I am quite an elderly person now, in manner and experience."

"That is not the impression you convey, Louisa; you are considered handsomer, and certainly more agreeable, than in your thoughtless days of singlehood: even Lord Elford observed—"

"Lord Elford!" I hastily exclaimed, "what did he say?" The blood rushed to my face and neck, and retreated again to my heart: I became cold as marble; but I made an effort to conceal my feelings, and resumed: "What could he say of a woman who had injured him so deeply?"

"Lord Elford," replied Lady Langham, quietly, "remarked you were extremely improved in your personal appearance; and as he is rather a connoisseur in beauty, you must receive the flattering truth."

I made no reply: my heart seemed to leap to my lips, but I could not prevail upon myself to repeat its thoughts. Lord Elford had then remarked my looks, and he had spoken of me! Lord Elford had gazed upon the face which betrayed him, and his lips had uttered my name without a shudder! I sunk back in silence to enjoy this delightful idea, and Lady Langham proceeded calmly in her everlasting worsted-work. I cannot attempt to describe the sensations of mingled regret, admiration, self-reproach, and gra-

tification which were raised in my soul by this communication : it threw me quite into disorder, and remained upon my memory to haunt me with alternate anxiety and pleasure. Of what consequence was Lord Elford's expressed approbation of my beauty ? We should meet no more ; at least, I fervently hoped, after my last interview and conversation, we should be apart for ever, and his remark affected me not ; I therefore strove to forget the remark in my routine of studies. How weak is human nature, and how vanity will cling to the struggling soul ! I read on without understanding, and my eyes looked upon a confusion of words to which my sense was dead : my thoughts would revert to Lord Elford and his observation.

I was pleased to believe I had been remarked by the man I had so ungraciously treated, and whose very remark proved his interest in me still unbroken. He might be hurt, unalienably hurt, by my wretched want of principle, yet if he observed my alteration for the better, and commented upon it to others—though it was a simple point of looks only which attracted the remark—yet did I feel gratified and soothed. Lord Elford would love another, and become the husband of a more deserving woman, but his remembrance of me would be lasting. We should never meet again ; but his last look had

rested upon my improved beauty, and I should be a pleasing image whenever I passed before his mind in recollections of the past. I should never forget him. My conscience would be undying in its remorse for having deceived a man so trusting, so high-souled, and I prayed that he might be happy with a creature who would value his affection and his excellence. Yet did the prayer fail to give me tranquillity.

Charlton Leigh remained alone till the dressing-bell called us to our evening preparations. When we met, conversation became dull and languid, for I could not resume my usual tone of spirits, and my lover felt distressed and dejected at the result of our morning's *tête-à-tête*. The dinner passed heavily, and the evening could not raise the spirits of our little party. Sir James Langham, in consideration of his friend's feelings, had decided upon travelling a stage before breakfast, consequently the evening would terminate his suspense, and we should take our leave in separating for the night. I dreaded that moment, for well did I know the pangs of an unrequited attachment, and my heart bled for the pale cheek and quivering lip of poor Charlton. But I could not offer hope. When the candles were lighted, and the butler withdrawn with the little troop who constantly attended evening prayers, then did I tremble for myself and for him.

He approached me with solemnity, and took my extended hand.

“ I am come at last,” he said, “ to this dreaded moment. Must I go indeed? Must I leave you utterly hopeless, Mrs. Thelwal, without one short sentence to offer even a distant ray to my unfeigned love? Have you really sought and discovered no feeling in your heart which time might strengthen into pity and affection? Once more reflect. I am gone at a sign, therefore do not frown me away; but at this last moment, ponder over the sufferings you are consigning to my share, and speak one gentle word, if you can do so with sincerity.”

My hand trembled, as it remained powerless in Charlton's grasp; his eyes were fixed upon my face with intense anxiety, and the Langhams remained awaiting the issue of the conversation. I was extremely agitated, and sighed deeply.

“ If any period could be named for my absence,” continued Charlton, gaining hope from my emotion, “ if you banish me any time from your presence, I will bear it patiently, so there is a chance of winning your notice at last.”

“ Stay, Mr. Leigh,” I exclaimed in hurried accents. “ Do not hope against hope. I know the misery of unreturned love, and I feel most sincerely the pangs I have unwittingly caused; but when I assure you I cannot return your affection,

spare me pain which I would not willingly inflict upon yourself. I cannot return your affection, Mr. Leigh, and I have never encouraged your attentions. Let me say at once good night, and God bless you, my kind friend."

I withdrew my hand, and the tears rushed into my eyes.

"May you be happy, Charlton, and to hear of your happiness will always interest me, as a sister would feel for her brother's welfare. I will not say adieu."

I courtesied to Mr. Leigh, and passed on: he bowed, but did not, or could not speak, and I retired to my room, full of low and bitter reflections. At an early hour in the morning I heard the chaise drive away from the Hermitage, and Lady Langham and myself sat down at the usual hour to a *tête-à-tête* breakfast. Charlton had suffered much the previous evening after I had parted from him, but he had done justice to my honourable treatment; he confessed to my friends the rashness of his encountering my society at the Hermitage after a decided refusal, and acquitted me of the least intention to trifle with his feelings. This was but just and manly.

Sir James Langham's absence was intended not to exceed two days, but the second day's post brought an excuse for further delay: he could not

be with us for some days, and we were to make ourselves happy in his absence. "Tell Mrs. Thelwal," Sir James wrote, "that her poor friend was very cut-throat the first day, better the second, and so on: he will do like all wretched lovers, look very 'Peter Grievous' till he sees a new face to please his fancy, and then begin fresh complainings." I hoped it might be so, for Mr. Leigh had faded from *my* remembrance long before the first day closed its shadows round me.

I was advised by Lady Langham to take this opportunity to visit Charles and Charlotte. She said she could spare me now, but if Langham brought two or three friends down with him, which he might do, without giving her the least notice of their approach, she could not relinquish the assistance of my conversation. This was flattering from Lady Langham, and the sincerity of her words was indubitable.

I told her so; she smiled.

"I never withheld my opinion in your naughty days, Louisa, and in this time of your very friendly and agreeable company, I speak with equal freedom."

"You are hoping all things from a creature of your own remodelling, Anne, and you are bound to like the work of your own hands."

"Not so, Louisa: I often argued opinions with

you, but I cannot claim to myself the honour and pleasure of your reformation, if I may so call it : your own good sense could lead you in the hour of sorrow to an altar where alone reformation is effected, and which I always hoped would some day see you prostrate at its base."

"Yes, your early prophecy was most truly spoken : do you not recollect telling me I should suffer long and acutely before conviction of error would dawn upon me ? I have, indeed, bought experience at a heavy price, but I welcome its pangs for the tranquillity it has brought me now. I should be again happy, could I forget or wash away my two most flagrant crimes ; but they hang heavily on my heart, for they are sins I cannot repair."

"I think I know to which you allude," replied Lady Langham, in kindest accents of sympathy.

"I can never repair my sin against poor Mr. Ellis," I proceeded ; he is gone to his grave, and cannot know my repentance or my punishment : he cannot know his legacy was the means of bringing chastisement upon me, nor can he know how. I pray to dispose of it as he would wish, in giving comfort to others."

I sighed heavily : these were moments of confession when I wept bitterly, and the tears of contrition relieved a swelling and repentant heart. I continued :—

“If I had only listened to your admonitions, my best of friends, this load of sorrowful recollections would not rise up to torture me in my meditations. I could not live happily with Charlton Leigh: his character has not firmness enough to engage my esteem: I have only seen and known him as a timid, entreating lover, and that simply imploring situation has no attractions for me. I have been deceived as well as deceiving, and my mind shrinks with alarm from common love and common expressions, which mean so little.”

“Charlton had not a common mind,” replied Lady Langham, “he possessed talents of a high order, and the very best disposition. He would make a domestic and agreeable companion.”

“All your husband’s friends have been men of strong worth, Anne, except my husband, and where could be the bond of union between his cold heart and Sir James Langham’s most worthy nature?”

“My husband’s acquaintance with Captain Thewal began in youth, and the accomplished attractive manners of your husband as they advanced in life veiled his principles. As a gambler, Sir James never recognised him, and his treatment of yourself was as foreign to my husband’s anticipations, as it could be to your own. He never thought so unfavourably of his friend as

I did from our first introduction, and yet I could not imagine him so far plunged in guilt as he proved to be. Sir James never suspects, and his own excellent heart is easily disposed to give credit to virtues which others affect. Captain Thelwal had been too much on the Continent to be very nice in his opinion of female virtue, and the influence of his female companions led him to ruin. There was no principle to save him. Charlton Leigh had high and honourable feelings, though his love for yourself somewhat lessened him in your eyes."

"I shall never marry again, Lady Langham."

"Don't make affirmations, Louisa; you will marry, and you will be very happy,—for you now appreciate worth for its own sake—and have been early taught a severe lesson. You are young, and handsome, and rich. You may choose from a multitude."

"The sort of character I could admire will never fancy me in my fallen state."

"Why not, Louisa? The wild unfledged notions and actions of a girl are not more fascinating than the modest restraints of an improved character and a chastised mind."

"But a widow, Anne, is never so much liked or cared for as—" I hesitated—"everybody speaks of a widow with alarm."

“Mr. Leigh had no alarms, my dear friend.”

“Oh! no, perhaps, not such as Charlton; but in a general way, you know—”

“It must be the widow’s fault, if a slight is affixed to her condition,” replied my friend; “and if ‘such as Charlton’ see no objections, you would not condescend to please a less estimable man.”

“I cannot quite explain myself, Anne, but I know what I mean.”

Lady Langham smiled, and her smile made me colour to any fingers’ ends. I was silent.

“A man such as you believe capable of attaching you, must prefer Mrs. Thelwal to Miss Vansittart. Such a mind as Lord Elford’s, for instance.”

I rose hastily from my chair, and reseated myself. My agitation was too perceptible to be glossed over by affectation under the acute eye of Lady Langham, but she took no notice of my confusion.

“Such a mind as Lord Elford’s, for instance, would value and respect your situation with the delicacy of Charlton Leigh, and you do not rate his lordship’s opinion too low; he is such as Charlton.”

“Oh! do not name them together, Lady Langham; one has proved his more than noble-

ness of mind ; I know nothing of Charlton beyond a common admiration, and perseverance in expressing it, when he knew my dislike to listen to him upon that subject."

"Lord Elford is indeed no common character," said Lady Langham.

"I shall never see him again;—I do not wish to see him again," I resumed, after a short pause; "but no sentiments less grand, no character less estimable than his, could attract me now."

"Charlton Leigh?" asked Lady Langham, raising her head from her work.

"We were not talking of him, or thinking of him, Anne," I replied pettishly. Again a smile played upon the lips of my companion, but our conversation dropped, and I fell into a long revery. The next day I went to Bradford for a short visit, with injunctions to be at the Hermitage on the Monday at farthest. I promised with alacrity to obey the flattering command.

Charlotte and Henry were the *beau idéal* of pastoral happiness. Their unvarying routine of visits and charities, their early hours, and perfect affection to each other were charming to my lately changed tastes. There was a time when such scenes would have ennuied and drawn forth my power of ridicule, but now they calmed my spirit

and tended to improvement. I compared Charlotte's blessed lot with my own mistaken views, and I confessed her judgment was right, and my own reasonings hollow and fallacious. Vanity had coloured every mental picture with her own gaudy materials, and as time effaced, and experience detected the imposition, my mind became a blank, which only religion and long suffering could again fill up. Charlotte had enjoyed years of happy innocence, while I was only beginning to understand the importance of the portion of life I had passed in error and its attendant punishment. Henry Brereton's patience with the ignorant and unreflecting portion of his parishioners excited my highest admiration of his temper and humility: and this was the man, the "Emma Brereton's brother," whom I tried to entangle in a heartless flirtation! whichever way I turned my sins appeared before me in a thousand shapes. I never wearied in attending Henry when he made his rounds among the poor, and visited the sick with words of consolation and acts of kindness: the occupation gave me health and strength. I understood more of the morals and religious feeling of the lower orders than I had ever gained by reading and conversation; for here I beheld them in their own dwellings, and heard their sorrows from their own lips. I observed, as I had done in Mrs. Pear-

son's case, a strong dependence upon an overruling Providence in the minds of the better order of poor, and a prepared state of feeling to meet the approach of death, which is more laboriously concealed from the higher classes of society. I went with my brother into a cottage where a dying woman was surrounded a by few affectionate friends: all spoke feelingly and kindly of her illness, but no one attempted to conceal her danger; it was alluded to as an event which would release her from all worldly care.

"Do you think, Jenny, you'll be for seeing the morning?" asked one friend as she administered a little tea to the invalid.

"I don't think I shall hear the clock strike twelve this night," replied the poor woman in faint accents.

"Well, Jenny, you've lived a good piece, and we must all go sooner or later to our Maker."

"Yes," replied the dying woman, "He says, 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"

"Your husband is gone before you, neighbour, and your daughter married to a steady man: there's nothing to abide here for now."

"I am content to go," faintly articulated the invalid, "for He will not desert his own."

"Well, Jenny, if you are alive to-morrow, I'll

see you again," said a neighbour who had not yet spoken.

"Say good bye now," replied the poor creature ;
"the morrow will not come for me."

I asked Henry if this was an unusual specimen of uncourtly truth.

"Not at all. The poor who have led a steady life are all very well acquainted with their Bible, and its pure doctrine is a fountain of repose to minds unacquainted with the disputes of theologians. They learn by heart their Saviour's deeds and promises, and find their account by its support in their hour of sickness. This class of poor are removed from the temptation of wealth and the contamination of depravity. A country village produces many worthless characters, but it also presents specimens of a Christian and simple life."

I loved to converse with Henry : there was a mild persuasion in his manner and matter which led me to reflection, and pointed out the path of truth without barbing the arrow of reproach. I sought his conversation without fearing its harsh strokes upon a very tender conscience. My time flew by at Bradford on wings of pleasure : my little nieces won upon my love with the attractions natural to infancy, and I lingered among the pleasant ones who sought to extend my visit. I relinquished

Charles and Emma's society, and gave all my furlough to Charlotte. They were within a walk of the Hermitage, but Henry's profession bound him and Charlotte to their home and flock. I therefore remained at Bradford till Monday ; and when Monday came I lingered till I had scarcely time to arrive at the Hermitage before the dressing-bell summoned its inmates to their toilet. I passed on to my room without paying a passing visit to the sitting-room ; but I knew Sir James had arrived, for I saw his hat in its appropriate place, and there were three others upon the hall table. He had, then, brought down friends, as Anne shrewdly suspected might be the case when she limited my stay at Bradford. I was in time to support her in the arduous task of entertaining four gentlemen at dinner, but Bradford and its quiet rural scenes were more adapted to my rather meditative turn of mind : I must chat with strangers when I would rather be following Henry and Charlotte in their daily round of calm occupation. How exceedingly unlike myself !

I was never accused of lingering over the duties of dress, though my taste was considered infallible in its arrangement ; I was therefore on my way to the drawing-room some time before the dinner-bell sounded, and I entered it before the lamps were lighted. April was passing on, and the days were

considerably lengthened ; but Sir James loved the brilliant glow of the gas far beyond the fading evening light, and at half-past seven all was closed in, and the pale evening banished. The shutters were unclosed at the moment I entered, and the figure of Sir James was reposing in his arm-chair : I went up to him :

“ Ah, my dear friend, you are returned to us at last, and positively sitting in the forlorn light you despise : tell me your wanderings.”

I held out my hand, and it was taken by Lord Elford.

“ Good heavens, my lord, is it you ?” I exclaimed, snatching my hand abruptly from his touch. “ Does Lady Langham know *you* are here ?”

“ I have had the pleasure of seeing Lady Langham, and being welcomed by her,” said my lord, rising and bowing.

I sat down mechanically, and Lord Elford resumed the arm-chair. A most distressing silence followed. I could not attempt conversation ; my dreadfully nervous ringing in the ears returned upon me : my heart palpitated, and my voice failed. I gave up the attempt. Lord Elford first recovered self-possession, and made some remark which agitation prevented me from comprehending. I bent forward slightly :

“ I beg pardon, my lord, you spoke to me, I believe ?”

“ It is a fine evening : you have not yet seen Sir James ?”

“ I am just returned from Bradford, and I have seen no one since my arrival.”

“ Your brother and sister are well, I hope.”

“ Quite well, thank you.”

We again became silent. I would have risen and quitted the room, but a sort of nightmare transfixed me. Again Lord Elford spoke.

“ Sir James and Lady Langham are looking very well ; I think country air improves everybody.”

I bowed. Lord Elford might have spirits and indifference enough to sustain a dialogue, for he was the injured one ; I, the injurer, was mute. He seemed to feel for my distress, which was becoming most painful, and delicately forbore further observations. I never was so awkwardly situated in my life.

The servants' entrance broke the resumed silence, and the closing of the shutters was a sound of relief. Lady Langham entered before their task was ended, and I breathed more freely in her presence. She shook hands with me, and upbraided me for not seeking her on my entrance from Bradford.

“ You are going to see an old friend, Louisa ;

Major Sandford is here, and I am sure you will rejoice to shake hands with Dr. Phillips."

"Ah, kind, good Dr. Phillips!" I exclaimed; but his name brought many painful associations with its sound. I struggled violently to conceal my feelings, and I succeeded in the effort. I would not for worlds have given way to tears before Lord Elford. Lady Langham changed the subject instantly, with great tact.

"My lord, your presence is a great compliment; how came you to discover your importance with us?"

I tried to catch Lord Elford's reply, which was in a tone of compliment, but the wretched ringing in my ears returned whenever I strained my attention to hear his voice. I was greatly relieved by Lady Langham's entering into conversation with him; it gave me time to collect my thoughts and assume some portion of self-control, which the powerful surprise of the meeting had destroyed. Who could have imagined Lord Elford would again reappear at the Hermitage? Had he so far become callous to my presence, that he could now meet me without a sigh? Was he for ever dead to the past, and was our once intimate connexion to be remembered only with indifference and disgust?

Sir James Langham's entrance dissolved my

mental colloquy, and his kind address soothed my soul. Dr. Phillips followed, and the benign look, the warm pressure of his hand, and the tones of his voice, brought the dying form of Thelwal so vividly before me, that a burst of tears was instantaneous and uncontrollable. Dr. Phillips read my emotion rightly, and the playful style of his chatty remarks, as he seated himself by me, enlivened and restored my composure. I welcomed Major Sandford with real pleasure, for his presence brought no painful association, and I felt certain in the present situation of things, that Major Sandford would be my chief and most unfettered companion : I even felt his little confidences would be welcome to break the awkwardness of my position with Lord Elford, and I was very willing to take Miss Bates's place, and listen to the history of Bob and the remarks of his uncle.

Sir James led me to the dining-room, and I was followed by Major Sandford, who seated himself on my right hand. This little arrangement allowed me to converse with each neighbour, and my eyes avoided encountering the nearly opposite figure of Lord Elford, whom I could hear describing Parisian scenes to Lady Langham. Dr. Phillips sat immediately fronting me, and though my thoughts often recurred to the painful cause of our first introduction, his conversation was particularly

cheering and agreeable. Major Sandford regretted the death of Captain Bates, but he assured me he should not have made his bow again in our neighbourhood, had he not learned from his friend Langham that Miss Bates had turned nun, and never exhibited herself to the eyes of man. He laughed much at the remembrance of his flight from Malvern, but he vowed he never was so terrified during the whole of his last campaign. Bob carried him to Cheltenham, cantering like mad that day.

I listened in smiling patience to Major Sandford's many valuable communications, for my appetite and natural spirits were departed, and I was grateful to any one who would allow me to fix my eyes upon their face, without attending to, or comprehending a word of their discourse. Sir James attacked me with good-humoured raillery upon my conduct of the week; but I could not reply with spirit, or meet his smiling eye. Lady Langham relieved all parties by withdrawing early to the drawing-room.

"Oh, Anne!" I exclaimed, when the door closed upon us, "I am undone by this visit of Lord Elford's, for his sight renews my wretched feelings and my remorse."

"I watched for you this morning, Louisa, and was very anxiously hoping to see you before we retired to dress; but I had given up the idea of

your return. All is over in point of awkward feeling on Lord Elford's part, and you will soon feel less distressed by his presence. While his lordship is with us, there are other gentlemen whose society will amuse, and whose conversation will engross your attention. A very short period will accustom you to his presence, and the common courtesies of daily meeting."

"It will be so on his part, doubtless, Lady Langham, when he recovers the first annoyance of finding me here, but with myself it will be long painful."

"Lord Elford was aware he should meet you," replied my friend.

My spirit rose, and repressed some rising tears.

"Men are not so forgiving as we are, Anne; but they are blessed in a quick forgetfulness. Since Lord Elford could meet me without disquiet, and think avoidance of my society unnecessary, I shall soon emulate the victory he has obtained over himself, for my conscience will be easy. I shall not remember what Lord Elford has forgotten."

"You will have opportunity to discover Major Sandford's really excellent qualities," said Lady Langham, smiling, "and the woman who can gain his affections from Bob will find them of great price."

"I have no intention of setting my cap at Major Sandford," I replied drily.

Lady Langham inquired kindly after her friends at Bradford, and skilfully turned my attention to other and more interesting subjects. I also found letters from Bath awaiting me, which I read with eagerness to my kind companion. My mother gave pleasing sketches of their mode of life, which promised such happy results that the Grange would henceforth become a desert. Dr. Drinkwater had completed the purchase of their present habitation, and had congratulated himself upon being delivered "from the further bother of the what's-his-names," though his own exertions were confined to writing a draft for payment. Charles had transacted the whole affair himself. The Stanhopes were constantly with them, and Mary's time was no longer devoted to nursing; for a twitch or a spasm in her husband's foot was talked or walked away by some invention of Stanhope, who had taken exclusive possession of the doctor's complaints. Mrs. Burton was knitting little socks for her grandson expectant, and her daughter, full of happy expectations, and blessed with perfect good-nature, was a host in herself.

All these little particulars were interesting, and we were chatting upon the contents of my letters when the gentlemen returned to us. Major Sandford at once took possession of my ear, by seating himself at my side, and commencing a sprightly conversation upon horses. A slight movement of

my head towards Lady Langham discovered to my view Lord Elford standing behind her chair, and I thought he was observing me. I could not endure that observation which seemed so distinctly to infer a fearless heart, and which pointed so strongly to my understanding the line of everlasting separation between us. I ceased to listen to Major Sandford, or reply to the mild speech of Dr. Phillips. I could not gain indifference under the cruel knowledge of Lord Elford's freedom of heart, for mine acknowledged the value of an affection once possessed and now lost for ever, and there was something wretchedly painful in constantly beholding an object whom I must admire and esteem, yet whose feelings rejected and disdained my conduct, and who was uninterested in my futurity.

The evening wore away in fruitless efforts to give my attention to the passing scene. I heard Lord Elford's quiet tones in conversation with Lady Langham and Dr. Phillips, and occasionally his remarks were extended to Major Sandford, but I was excluded as unworthy to receive communications from lips which had once spoken only to, or with reference to, myself! I was without the pale of all agreeable little parties in which he might fill a distinguished part. I must feel alone in a house full of company; I must be solitary in the midst of lively and loved society.

When the party broke up, I exchanged good

nights with Major Sandford and Dr. Phillips, and received the ever-ready shake of Sir James Langham's friendly hand. I turned timidly to courtesy a salutation towards Lord Elford, but his lordship's face was turned away from me. This marked action hurt me deeply. I was not an object of esteem or consideration, but surely I might receive the slight bow of common courtesy; I might expect the politeness of a gentleman towards any uninteresting individual when that individual was a lady. I also turned away, and quitted the room with Lady Langham. I knew now exactly where we stood in relation to each other. We should meet and be together daily, but we must remain utter strangers, and revolve round one axis at a fixed distance. We must often be placed in juxtaposition, but we could never be more decidedly separated had the wide Atlantic rolled between us. Let it then be so.

CHAPTER X.

I ENTERED the breakfast-room the following morning late, for I was resolved never again to risk a *tête-à-tête* with Lord Elford: the whole party were assembled, and my chair was guarded by Major Sandford. I entered, quite prepared to meet Lord Elford upon his own terms, and fortified in spirit by the meditations and determinations of the night. My spirit, roused by pride, acted under different motives than those suggested by vanity. I did not flirt with Major Sandford to conceal my feelings, or to try my power on either gentleman: I did not affect a gaiety foreign to my feelings: I only appeared calmly resolved that no word or action should betray my mortified and dejected soul: I remembered I had been a wife and was now a widow; my disquietudes should be known to none,

and I would rise superior to the depression which chained down a struggling heart, under the merited but unkind chill of Lord Elford's manner. I had done evil, but I had repented of that evil in sackcloth and ashes, and if a sincere repentance was acceptable to a merciful Providence ; if a sincere sorrow for past events had reconciled me to my family and friends, surely the resentment of one individual might be borne without complaint and in patience. With these thoughts, and under this conviction, I took my seat by Major Sandford, having, by a noble desire of returning good for evil, bowed to the whole company, including Lord Elford, though my eye rested not upon his face, and I could not observe whether the salutation had met a returning inclination, or had been doomed to pass unheeded. Major Sandford never allowed a pause in the discourse.

“ I am delighted to get you near me, Mrs. Thelwal, and as you are the only lady unappropriated, I shall be very attentive, to make the other gentlemen jealous. I know you will not alarm me as Miss Bates did, and you will admire Bob, wont you ? ”

“ Certainly, I will admire your horse, and everything you wish me to admire, if you will not be *exigeant*, and require me to say what I do not think.”

“ I got into a fine scrape the other day ; m’uncle was given over by his doctors, and indeed he seemed only fit for extreme unction ; so I gave the word of command, and had five-and-twenty horses turned out of the stable which were eating their heads off. It was well I had not sent them to the next fair to be sold for what they would fetch, for m’uncle made a sort of recovery, and talked of visiting the stables : you should have seen the grooms with their halters grinning and running for their lives to catch up the ugly and useless animals, and range them in their proper order again !”

“ Do you think you were justified in your rebellious step, Major Sandford ?”

“ It was rather premature, I fancy ; but I really thought he was going to sleep with his fathers, so it does not come under the head of rebellion, Mrs. Thelwal.”

“ Suppose we say it was a thoughtless action, then.”

“ Well, that sounds better : yes, it was thoughtless, but there they are at this moment stationed in their old places, and m’uncle’s stable is like the horse armoury.”

In such a harmless dialogue did the major and myself engage during the period of breakfast, and when the meal concluded, we dispersed in different directions. Dr. Phillips was a bird of passage : he

was on his way to Cheltenham, and we could not promise ourselves the pleasure of his company beyond the present day; Lord Elford and Major Sandford would be guests at the Hermitage for some weeks. Sir James Langham invited the doctor to walk through the grounds, and examine the contents of his library, and I offered myself as his *cicerone*. The doctor accepted the challenge, and two of the party were disposed of, for we instantly began our tour of the property. Major Sandford would fain accompany us, but I could not undertake his conversation at all times: in the afternoon, or during dinner, it was a relief to turn towards the unsuspicious major and chat away awkward feelings; but "*toujours perdrix*" was a proverb applicable to the most agreeable, and therefore keenly felt in the constant society of such a man as the garrulous major. I waved him away, and bade him prepare Bob for my admiration when I returned from my walk.

Dr. Phillips and myself slowly proceeded in our destined survey. We were to observe the different points where clumps had been planted, or trees removed to allow the view of some particular object, and I was to point the doctor's attention to the alterations contemplated by Sir James, and suggested by his lady. All this I undertook to perform, but not a thing was effected

or even remembered—our discourse became much too interesting. I do not know how the conversation wandered

“ From grave to gay, from lively to severe,”

but we were engaged in long and animated debates upon various subjects, till we found ourselves again at the hall door. Dr. Phillips would not part with me. He relinquished his examination of the library to a future period.

“ Let us continue our walk, Mrs. Thelwal, I have often the privilege of *entrée* into libraries, but I rarely enjoy the pleasure of an agreeable woman’s conversation. Let me try to make that gay major jealous by detaining you.”

I was nothing loath, and we again retraced our steps, and again became deeply engaged in argument. Gradually, however, our attention became attracted by Major Sandford capering upon Bob at a distance, and evidently caracoling to arrest our notice. Dr. Phillips remarked upon the circumstance with liveliness, but with some point.

“ I perceive the major upon the scent, Mrs. Thelwal; must we answer the private signal, and appear to wait for him?”

“ Let us vanish into this walk,” I replied. “ The major will be a treat as a relish, but then it must be

at the conclusion of a feast, not allowable during the two first courses."

"I must bow to that compliment, because it was evidently intended for me, and elderly gentlemen are not shy in receiving the few crumbs of compliment which fall to their share; I am happy in your good opinion, Mrs. Thelwal."

"You had that long ago, doctor, *without* compliment. I am not gifted with a transient memory, and your kindness will remain in my heart for ever."

"Well then, mutual obligation originates friendship, and I am under obligation to yourself for making me spend some hours very agreeably. Now then, as we have begun an everlasting friendship, tell me what you mean to do with the major?"

"The major belongs exclusively to Bob, Dr. Phillips. Do not take liberties with his name, or delude me with the idea of becoming a rival to that stout dark hunter."

"Your heart is free in that quarter, I perceive," replied the doctor; "but no lady could make the major her knight when Lord Elford is in the field."

"Major Sandford is very good-natured," I observed, in a somewhat tremulous tone; "and though his mouth is not of mortal mould, yet, like the fairy

tale, diamonds and pearls issue from its cavern, for his words are never unkind, or his thoughts upon others severe."

"I like him," replied the doctor, seriously. "I am only speaking of a lady's taste, and both the gentlemen are old acquaintance of yours."

"Yes," I faltered out.

"I became known to Lord Elford only at the time of your accident, but we grew excellent friends upon that sudden introduction, and I think few of our young noblemen possess his steadiness of character."

I listened with eager attention to Doctor Phillips, and drank in his words with an interest I dared not express, but I bowed assent to his remark.

"I was so much pleased with his lordship's anxiety about yourself," continued Dr. Phillips, "that I was certain his was not a common mind. Few men care about a person whom they have knocked down accidentally, but there was so much interest in his manner, and his visits were so regular during Captain Thelwal's illness, to inquire after your health, that I have placed him very high in my opinion. I am sure he has a most feeling heart, and such a man must please a lady's eye and mind."

"He has made a strong impression upon

yours, doctor," I observed, with rather more firmness of voice.

"I admire his lordship greatly. I admire his cast of mind, and strikingly agreeable exterior; but I admire, more than all, his upright noble sentiments, and his conciliating manners. In short, I consider him a jewel of uncommon value in the present age of counterfeits. If I had a daughter whose happiness was my anxious care, I should wish to give her to Lord Elford."

My judgment went with Dr. Phillips's remarks, but I could not continue the subject, and any other became comparatively uninteresting; our remaining walk was concluded in silence, and I felt much fatigued when we reached the Hermitage a second time. I confessed myself extremely weary, and we both agreed to lounge away an hour in the library; not among the authors of antiquity, but in the enjoyment of rest and idle chat in the arm chairs, so adapted for repose and luxurious meditation. But we were not to enjoy each other's exclusive society, for Lord Elford was in possession of the sofa, and he started from a recumbent position on our entrance.

Dr. Phillips explained our feelings and intentions, and only requested silent admission for

himself and a fair friend ; he hoped our presence would not disturb his lordship's meditations. Lord Elford pleaded guilty to a fit of musing almost bordering upon a nap, but he was glad to be roused from its stupor, and would seek Sir James in the grounds.

"Have you not taken exercise, my lord?" asked the doctor, "I recommend daily exercise to my patients as the most essential of all medicine : a portion of each day should be devoted to exercise, which enlivens both body and mind, provided it be not carried to excess, as in the case of Mrs. Thelwal ; I have selfishly extended my own pleasure at her expense, and I brought her here to be at rest for an hour."

Lord Elford looked at me, and caught a view of my pale cheeks and wearied expression, for he immediately wheeled a lounging-chair towards me, and I seated myself with a nervous trepidation, which prevented even a bow on my part, to acknowledge the polite movement. Dr. Phillips gaily felt my pulse.

"I shall take no fee, but I must restore those fading roses, Mrs. Thelwal. What a selfish dog I must be, to enjoy a very long walk without reflecting upon the strength of my companion ! Your pulse is high, my dear madam."

I felt it must be so, for they were beating most

throbbingly, but my fatigue was far inferior to the nervous excitation which produced the increased action. I assured Dr. Phillips I was already better, and then I bowed what I wished Lord Elford to understand and receive as a token of thanks for his polite attention. Dr. Phillips's eye was quickly attracted to the bookshelves, and a dialogue upon their contents took place between the gentlemen, which amused and instructed me, while I enjoyed the profound calm of silence in my own person. The conversation warmed and lengthened: Lord Elford forgot his intention of seeking Sir James Langham, and I renounced my private resolution of soon retiring from the library, by the energetic and interesting discussion which was taking place on the subject of ancient and modern literature. I was much amused by the lively quickness of Dr. Phillips's arguments in opposition to the mild but grave and learned disquisition of Lord Elford: I was a silent auditor, but my attention was riveted upon both speakers, and I listened with amazement to the quotations and references which were strewn so thickly in the web of their discourse. Dr. Phillips at length turned suddenly towards me.

"Mrs. Thelwal, the roses are returned, but who could imagine a dull controversy had power to revive them?"

"My mind is amused, doctor," I replied. "But

pray proceed, for your position has been seriously attacked."

"Oh, I see which way your ideas are bent; you desert me at my utmost need, Mrs. Thelwal, and you insinuate my danger with sparkling eyes, as if you had pleasure in seeing me struck down by the ancients!"

"I do not indeed: I admire particularly your very adroit defence of the moderns."

"But your opinion is with my lord," said the doctor, playfully clenching his fist at me.

I laughingly admitted he was correct, but I did not meet his lordship's glance; I only entreated the subject might be renewed, and the battle lost and won in proper form. Lord Elford declined the combat.

"I will not press you, doctor, at this moment: two to one is unfair."

The tone of voice in which these words were spoken, went to my heart: "two to one"—it seemed as if the expression included me in his thoughts, and coupled us in mental action together: the tone of voice, too, was so gentle—so like the tone of former days!

Sir James Langham and Major Sandford came in at the close of Lord Elford's sentence, and the thread of argument was broken for ever: no argument could live under the infliction of the major's garrulity, and Dr. Phillips must leave the Hermitage

on the following morning ; therefore the ancients and moderns reposed in peace, and I took an early opportunity to retire into Lady Langham's boudoir, where I was sure of a welcome reception, and where I could escape the somewhat persecuting attendance of Major Sandford. Miss Bates must have been an invaluable companion to him during his first visit in Gloucestershire, and I could not but think such a calm listening creature would have suited him in a matrimonial point of view, if he ever contemplated dividing his affections with Bob. I confess my own newly-acquired patience was sorely tried by the loud unsentimental expression of his tastes and feelings: Miss Bates was never surfeited by its repeated dose. I expressed my opinion to Lady Langham, and inquired if we could not yet manage to renew the acquaintance, but my friend shook her head.

“ I think Miss Bates alarmed the major beyond all hopes of recovery. He is an excellent person, and though a very common-place wife would suit him in point of intellect, the major would require ladylike and sprightly manners, and some charms of person.”

“ Miss Ellen Clifden,” I observed, smiling.

“ Yes, I agree with you : Ellen Clifden with her pony and riding-habit would be a dangerous object to Major Sandford.”

“ Oh, Anne, invite her here for my peace' sake :

you are witness to my patient forbearance under the poor major's attacks, but a week of it will destroy me."

Lady Langham looked at her watch : it was only four o'clock and the Clifdens were six miles distant, yet a visit might be achieved, and Miss Ellen might be prevailed upon to return with us to dinner, and remain a week at the Hermitage : the idea cheered and delighted me, and we were not long preparing for the drive.

The Clifdens were at home, and Lady Langham, after due compliments, observed the absence of the lady we had resolved to appropriate. " Where was Miss Ellen Clifden ?" Mrs. Clifden confessed her daughter was at home, but a severe attack of headach confined her to her room. " Ellen is not well, Lady Langham : she loses her appetite and is thinner and paler than she used to be : I think the sea air would be serviceable, but Mr. Clifden cannot be prevailed upon to quit home."

This was all in our favour. Lady Langham's request to be favoured with Miss Ellen's company for a few days was met with pleasure and gratitude on the mother's part, and with most delighted readiness on that of the daughter, who was unexpectedly invited to gay society and a new scene, just as she had renounced all hope of leaving home for the summer, by her father's declining to

attend her to the sea-side. Her headach was lost in agreeable sensations, as she descended to accept Lady Langham's invitation, and again flew back to hurry the preparation of the necessary packages which always accompany a lady's transit. Her tongue equalled the major's in rapidity as we drove home. "She was so happy, so delighted with the invitation, for she had cried herself ill upon her father's cross refusal to take them to Weston-super-Mare; and Selina was just as vexed as herself. It was so kind of Lady Langham to bid her pack up her riding-habit; for if she loved one thing more dearly than another, it was cantering with all her might up hill and down dale, in spite of her father's assertion that she would break her neck, and her pony, 'Rattler,' was to be sent next morning before breakfast without fail.

Our expectation respecting Major Sandford and Miss Ellen Clifden was even budding after an hour's introduction of the parties. For some short period Miss Ellen appeared rather shy, and the major addressed his remarks to myself; but their tastes accorded too well, not to secure a speedy collision and effect an everlasting friendship in minds so imbued with the love of horses and horse exercise: they were deeply engaged in the merits of Bob and Rattler when the summons to dinner broke up their energetic discourse; but Major

Sandford instantly offered his arm to Miss Ellen, and her happy laugh rewarded her companion for his efforts, and enlivened the repast by its joyous sound. I was now consigned to Dr. Phillips and Sir James Langham in peace.

Miss Ellen confessed her admiration of Major Sandford very ingenuously, when we retired into the drawing-room. She perceived he was extremely clever, and had rarely met a gentleman so very good-natured, yet with so much drollery.

“I assure you, Mrs. Thelwal, I never can be sufficiently obliged to Lady Langham for her kindness in asking me here : my headach is quite gone, and I feel the change of air already. Pray is Major Sandford married ?”

“He is a bachelor of good fortune and still better expectations, at your service, Miss Ellen,” I replied.

“Oh, I did not think of that—but, Mrs. Thelwal, is he not considered remarkably clever ?”

“You will find him full of convincing arguments to prove your Rattler inferior to Bob, Miss Ellen.”

“Oh, yes, that I know ; but we are to run a race to-morrow, and the major thinks I shall be thrown ; he little imagines how Rattler and myself have galloped together, and how often he has tried to kick me over his head, a dear thing ! I am quite prepared to win our wager.”

“And what is your wager?” I asked, alarmed for the lady’s chance.

“Oh, we play for hearts: if I win, the major loses his heart; and if he is successful, I am to surrender mine. Is not that a good joke? But I can depend upon Rattler.”

Lady Langham was infinitely entertained with the nature of the bet. I thought poor Miss Ellen was likely to be a sufferer by the whole transaction; but the openness of her manner shewed her utter ignorance of all art.

“I suppose, Miss Clifden, you are aware of the value of the stake? The major’s heart, when it is won, may be a troublesome prize?”

“Oh, I’m sure to win it, for Rattler will not disappoint his mistress; but as to taking the major’s heart, oh dear me! Mrs. Thelwal, what am I to do with it?”

“There is the rub, Miss Clifden: that is the point to which I desire to draw your attention.”

“Gracious me! I must change the wager, for mamma would be shocked at my boldness, and Selina would never let me rest about it: shall I wager a pair of gloves, Lady Langham?”

“Gloves are better toys than hearts, Miss Ellen, to bandy with gentlemen in wagers.”

“Oh goodness yes! Well a nice pair of habit-gloves, then, and papa will be so amused. I rode

a kind of race with Mr. Charles Morton once, and I laughed so dreadfully at his prim figure and long coat-laps flying in the air, that I nearly tumbled off, but away went Rattler and we won by two hands, papa said."

"Are you not fearful of accidents, Ellen?"

"Oh gracious no! Papa says, I should only have a good thump, and I cling like forty cats to the saddle. La, here are the gentlemen already—how very soon!—Well, Major Sandford, I am going to change my bet."

"A bet is a bet," Miss Clifden, and it is registered in my betting-book," answered Major Sandford, resuming his seat by her side.

"Oh, goodness! don't put it there! Besides I want to exchange it for a pair of habit-gloves. Lady Langham says, gloves are better things to bet with, and I think so too. But you will lose, major."

"Then you shall receive your wager, Miss Clifden, unless you allow me to exchange it for some trifle I may fancy."

"Oh, la, yes; that's just what I wish."

"What is all this betting about?" exclaimed Sir James Langham. "Miss Clifden, what are you and the major 'nippering' about?"

The wager was explained to him: he was equally amused with his lady at its purport.

"Very well; I undertake to be umpire, and

let me understand the affair thoroughly. If Miss Clifden is thrown, or loses the race, her heart is to become the property of Major Sandford; and if—”

“ Oh, la, goodness; don’t say that Sir James! It is a pair of habit-gloves, from Norris’s, at Gloucester; hearts wont do, for one never gets paid.”

“ I object to all wagers but the original one,” persisted the gallant major. “ I am quite prepared to pay my forfeit, if I lose the race.”

“ How very droll!” exclaimed Miss Ellen Clifden. “ Now really, Sir James, you must take my part.”

“ Did you, or did you not, wager your heart, Miss Clifden?” asked Sir James, with mock solemnity.

“ Dear, yes, I believe I did; but I did not know what I was about,” exclaimed Miss Ellen, beginning to feel alarmed.

“ My art,” observed Dr. Phillips, “ can only extend to broken limbs to-morrow; I do not heal a broken heart.”

“ Well, indeed, I declare I don’t like my wager at all,” cried Miss Ellen, coming close to my side, and clinging to my arm. “ Do, dear Mrs. Thelwal, take my part: tell the Major it’s all nonsense.”

“ Sandford, your heart is returned upon your

hands, the lady repents having accepted such a bargain," said Sir James; "and you are bound to take it back."

"Let me settle my own affairs, Langham. I tell you the wager is booked."

A fluttering, giggling dialogue again ensued between the major and Miss Ellen, and by the long, prosy voice of the former, and the short, quick laughs of the latter, I judged an accommodation had been effected.

I was greatly excited when I withdrew my attention from this well-matched couple, by a request from Dr. Phillips to Lord Elford, which he was proffering with considerable earnestness.

"My dear lord, accompany me to Cheltenham, to-morrow, and renew your visit here at a future period. You have not seen Cheltenham, you say. Of course, no city in Europe can enter into a comparison with London; yet I think you will allow it to be a beautiful specimen of a wealthy and elegant English town, and our highest titles are constantly exhibited upon the arrival-book."

"Not at this time, Phillips. I admire Cheltenham by your description, and I shall see it at another time; but at this moment I am engaged in many ways."

"One week, then; I will release you in one week," urged the doctor.

I listened with painful eagerness to the reply. "Will he go, or will he stay?" thought I. I breathed with difficulty lest the answer should escape me.

"I cannot leave the Hermitage at present; perhaps a week hence you may see me."

What a blessed relief! I should certainly be in his company another week, and what then? I should only be miserable, much more miserable than if we had not again met; but sorrow was always to be my companion in future. I had laid up a store for a long life.

"You must remain some weeks when you do favour me with your company," continued the doctor. "Cheltenham is a focus from which many rays diverge. We have some beautiful rides and drives on all sides. Berkeley Castle is one of our lions, and Malvern Wells and Hills are divine as a background. You, perhaps, never were at Malvern?"

"I was there once," replied Lord Elford; "but if I can avoid it, I will not visit it a second time."

"You were ill there, perhaps, my lord?"

"It was the cause of illness," replied Lord Elford, calmly; and there was silence.

I felt distressed beyond description, yet I could not move without discovering my near neighbourhood and agitation to Lord Elford, who was seated with his back towards the end of the table at which

I had placed myself, after Miss Clifden had quitted my arm. I was not seen by his lordship, and he possibly imagined me still forming one of the giggling group. Sir James and his lady were playing a conjugal game of cribbage at a little side-table. After a few moments' silence, Lord Elford spoke again.

“There are some scenes, Phillips, one can never view a second time without infinite pain. If one has been very unhappy, the scene does not always bring a renewal of its gloom, and the remembrance is not always displeasing: but a spot which conjures up past hopes and past happiness is never revisited without agony, when that hope and that happiness are quenched for ever.”

I could not hear the doctor's reply, for tears burst from my eyes, and sighs would burst from my heart: I hid my face in my hands.

“There is a consolation in many cases,” replied Lord Elford, to some uncaught remarks of Dr. Phillips, “when all the feeling has not been doomed to one side, and it has been shared and soothed, perhaps, by a heart as affectionate as itself. But when it discovers its own desolation, that it has been scorned and trifled with, and must bear its burden singly and in silence—no one will revisit those scenes, Phillips.”

And was Lord Elford thinking of me as he uttered

these sentiments? Oh no!—his mind might recur to a distant and powerful shock, and decline renewing its recollections, but I was no longer a thing of interest, or allowed to sully his memory. He was speaking generally; but individually, the sting of my conduct was extracted, and indifference had seared the wound.

Dr. Phillips perceived the tone of Lord Elford's mind was tinged with some passing melancholy, and he sought to amuse and remove its effect. He turned quickly to me for assistance.

“Mrs. Thelwal, come and chat half as agreeably with my lord as you did with me this morning, and you will charm away a dark spirit.”

Lord Elford appeared surprised and confused by my nearness, but his manners never lost their calm and dignified tone. He apologized simply for having been unconsciously seated with his back to a lady.

“Mrs. Thelwal is Annot Lisle,” continued the doctor, “and she shall harp away our gloomy thoughts. Two men getting together were sure to be gloomy.”

But Lord Elford had seen my distressed look, and the tears which had rolled copiously down my cheek: he was never forgetful or unforgiving.

“Mrs. Thelwal, you are cold, and I have been excluding you from the warmth;” and Lord Elford led me to a chair near the fire, yet away from the

glaring light of the lamps. Yes, he led me unre-sisting to a chair, and even lingered by me : his kind nature could not endure to see me suffering, though I had betrayed his peace.

Dr. Phillips followed us, and took himself to task for having urged me to a walk in the morning, which was beyond my strength ; I laid my hand upon his arm, and pressed it in silence : I shook my head, and tried to smile away his fears, but not a word arose to my lips for some moments. At last I rallied the powers of speech.

“ My spirits are frequently attacked, my dear sir, but not by such slight fatigue as I experienced this morning : it was too pleasurable to my mind to create effort. My illness is of the heart : will you light a candle for me, and do not let me disturb the party ; I will retire silently, if you please.”

Lord Elford obeyed my wish, and placed a lighted taper in my hand : I rose as I received it, and for the first time since our meeting at the Hermitage I met his lordship's eye. It was fixed upon me with a look so full of melancholy, yet with an expression so kind and sympathizing, that my little stock of composure fled, and the gushing tears blinded me in their descent. I held out my hand to Dr. Phillips in silence, which he kissed with profound respect, but without remark, and it was well his kindly heart forbore to condole or soothe my distress : one word of pity would have produced fearful effects

upon feelings already strained to the uttermost. I was passing Lord Elford with a timid bow which could not express the grateful repentant state of my soul, when I felt my hand in his, and I was conducted by him to the door. He spoke some words as he opened it for my egress, but I cannot remember them : they were in kindness, because all he ever spoke was good and gentle, but I could not gather their sense. I stood for one moment on the threshold with the intention of offering my thanks for the attention, but I turned from the fruitless attempt, and proceeded onwards. I heard the drawing-room door close some moments after I had gained the staircase.

I knelt in fervent prayer that night. I prayed for patience and calmness under the present position of events, and I implored strength to meet all sorrow in humility. Had Lord Elford not appeared to weigh down my spirit, and renew past bitterness, time had healed the wounds of my heart, and change of scene in the society of my friends would have obliterated my sufferings by slow but sure degrees. But Lord Elford's presence was fatal to my repose. I could not hear his voice, or meet his glance without considerable emotion, and the dignity of his bearing, equally removed from anger or familiar interchange of civilities, raised my admiration and regret. He was now a dangerous object to my heart, for the alternate

passions which glowed in my breast promised to break down the barriers which sustained my peace of mind. Had Lord Elford exhibited offended pride, or marked contempt in his manner towards me, I could have resisted the influence which was stealing upon me, but I was not prepared to meet a gentleness which soothed and excited my feelings:—or become an auditor in his description of his own melancholy remembrance of the past. I could not remain at the Hermitage, in the constant risk of his company, without laying up deep and everlasting misery for my portion. And I knew that if I wished to escape a passion which threatened powerful results, I must take a sudden flight from the present scenes, before love, remorse, and hopelessness, should destroy me. Good heavens! could another attachment bind me to earth? Was I again on the point of loving with energy and desperate affection? But this growing sentiment differed essentially from the mad love I bore to Thelwal. This influence, beginning in admiration of character, in a repenting spirit, in the remembrance of a past engagement, and in gratitude for gentle treatment, would be less tumultuous, but more insidious.—It would be a love rooted into my soul,—noiseless, enduring, and unextinguishable.

CHAPTER XI.

IT was decided we were all to witness the contest of speed between Rob and Rattler ; and a riding party was made up during breakfast, from which Miss Ellen Clifden would emerge upon Hipplesley Down, and try Rattler's metal in a gallop of half-a-mile against Major Sandford's hunter. Dr. Phillips regretted his engagements at Cheltenham prevented him attending the race in a medical capacity ; but he gave his best wishes to the pony, and he sincerely hoped Miss Clifden would win the wager,—and dispose of it to her benefit. Miss Ellen smiled, and bridled, and looked at the major, who sat by her side, with an immense polyanthus in his button-hole, prosing away about his uncle's five-and-twenty horses, and assuring his fair antagonist he should insist upon the bet in its original form. She was extremely well satisfied with her prospects

and perfectly delighted with Major Sandford's long stories, occasionally exclaiming, "Oh major, well, I never"—"now major, I declare you are too bad"—but her hearty laughs bore testimony to her approbation; and the major was fortunate enough to have at last found an admirer, a patient listener, and a ready speaker. *Tria juncta in uno*. He was also in the very highest spirits.

Lady Langham expressed her intention of riding—and Lord Elford was to be her knight, for my natural timidity on horseback prevented my joining in that delightful exercise, but Sir James protested I should enjoy the sight, therefore he would drive me in his curricule. He considered it a wise plan also, as we could bring back the slain, or convey Miss Clifden's forfeit heart to the major, in the true and proper way in which those things should be done. To this sally of imagination Miss Ellen only waved her hand.

"Dear now for ever, Sir James, how can you? I declare you are too bad."

While Dr. Phillips was paying his adieus, the major was bustling in and out with Miss Clifden, handling her riding-whip, and passing judgment upon her habit. Their whole souls were engrossed in the forthcoming ride and race. I could hardly attend to the doctor's farewell, or speak my regret at his short visit.

“ You have shone upon us, Dr. Phillips, to shew your power, and you withdraw your society that we may feel our loss.”

“ Oh dear, Mrs. Thelwal, have you a pair of riding-gloves ? If you’ll believe me I forgot to put mine up ; now wasn’t that silly of me !”

I turned to relieve Miss Ellen’s mind, and she flew from me repeating “ A thousand thanks, a thousand thanks, but I can’t stop just now.” I then asked the doctor if he had retired for ever from the fatigues of London practice, but again his reply was interrupted.

“ Well, here I am again, but I know you will be so kind as to allow your maid just to alter this collar for me, wont you ? The major says, nobody wears the corners round, so if you please it shall be squared by Nicholls : I know I’m very teasing. Oh, Major Sandford, you’ll ruin my whip, you’ll ruin my whip !”

Off flew Miss Ellen to rescue her whip from the major’s grasp, and in that interregnum I received the kind adieu of the excellent Dr. Phillips. I attended him to the hall-door with Lady Langham.

“ How I love to be attended by ladies,” he observed ; “ I wonder any man can exist without such earthly comforters. Destiny, not Will, compelled me to be an old *solitaire* : we cannot command all

things to our mind, else what a world would this be !”

“ For ‘ destiny,’ read ‘ irrational wishes,’ doctor,” I observed, sighing.

“ Amen,” replied the kind-hearted man as he entered his carriage ; “ I believe you are right.”

We turned to enter the hall, where Miss Clifden and the major were at high romps. I thought Mr. Clifden was perhaps in the right, when he did not consider Weston-super-Mare necessary to his daughter’s health.

“ Well, if all majors are like you, I declare I shall hate the army: now, Mrs. Thelwal, do order him to give up my whip. Papa gave it me.”

“ It’s years out of fashion, Miss Clifden ; if you hit Rattler with this great broomstick, he’ll bolt.”

“ There, Mrs. Thelwal, he calls it a broomstick ! I declare I’ll tell papa, so give it now, there’s a dear man.”

The major could not resist the coaxing tone and epithet of the last sentence ; the whip was surrendered and peace restored for a few moments, but “ *bella, horrida bella*” were let loose, and again the hall resounded.

“ No, not that, indeed, Major Sandford ! Goodness for ever, Mrs. Thelwal, see what he is doing with my nice new hat ! positively he has put it upon Neptune’s head, and it will be full of fleas.”

“Why, Miss Clifden, Noah came out of the ark in such a hat as that; where did you buy the article?”

“Papa bought it at Gloucester, and it’s a very good hat, major. I won’t have it on the dog’s head! I declare I won’t stay in your company playing such tricks.—Will we now, Mrs. Thelwal?”

“I think we had better prepare for our ride,” said Lady Langham, rather anxious to dissolve the meeting, “and then, Miss Ellen, your property will be in your own possession.”

The major returned the contested hat after some beseeching on the part of the young lady, and a flirty dialogue of some length, when we escorted her to her room, because, she said, “the horrible major would be playing her some new trick, if Lady Langham and myself did not convey her safely away.”

I had no idea the major could command so much flirty material; but, to parody the well-known line,

“When flirt meets flirt, then comes the tug of war.”

Miss Clifden looked remarkably well on horseback. Her slight and rather common-place figure had an air of importance in her well-made riding-habit, and the hat gave an expression of seriousness to her small smiling features. She sat her horse very agreeably, and, in short, Miss Ellen

appeared to great advantage upon Rattler, as she wheeled round and round before the admiring major to shew off her palfrey's paces, and his obedience to the rein.

We set off in due time to Hipplesley Down: I enjoyed the open air and exquisite freshness of the fine spring morning, as we drove rapidly along; Sir James excessively amused at the idea of the race between Miss Clifden and her beau, and my own thoughts dwelling on the pleasure of having twice exchanged some trifling remark with Lord Elford during breakfast. His lordship had decidedly addressed me once; and if the second communication was less decidedly particular, yet he had looked for my opinion, and we had smiled upon each other as our eyes met: surely that was enough to engross all my thoughts, and lend a charm to the scene. Sir James laughed aloud.

"I think this is a queer sort of wager; upon my honour Sandford will be caught at last; don't you think so, Mrs. Thelwal?"

"I have some misgivings on the subject, I confess."

"Oh, you have! Then Anne has some too, I suppose, but she has not named them to me. I think I am becoming sharp-sighted at last: only think of my finding all this out!"

"But there is nothing to find out yet," I replied,

laughing at his high opinion of his newly-acquired talent.

“ Oh yes there is. If you ladies have had misgivings, there is enough to speculate upon. I shall be beforehand with Anne, this time.”

“ The parties are admirably matched, if anything should come of this introduction,” I observed.

“ Oh, the very thing for Sandford: they would ride a tour from the church door, and each feed their own horse. I must put him in mind of that.”

“ Better let everything take its own course, Sir James; Major Sandford will not be precipitated, and this little race may effect wonders.”

“ I suppose you understand these things; you and Anne have already decided the match in your own minds, so it will infallibly come to pass. But remember, I have been equally quick-sighted this time.”

The equestrian party had preceded us some time, and the quartette were discoursing in an animated style when we joined them on the piece of common which bore the title of Hipposley Down. Miss Clifden cantered up to us escorted by the major.

“ Oh, Mrs. Thelwal and Sir James, do take my part in this matter. Lady Langham does not like my running this race, because she fears an acci-

dent ; now what accident can happen with Rattler and myself, when we race together every day ?”

Lady Langham and Lord Elford drew near and the affair was canvassed with much vivacity.

“ Oh, goodness for ever !” exclaimed Miss Ellen, “ it will be dreadful to be disappointed after having thought of it ever since last night ; pray, Sir James, what do you and Mrs. Thelwal think ?”

We were all inclined to judge with Lady Langham, that if any accident did occur, it would be laid to her charge by the young lady’s parents, and be a most distressing termination to a pleasurable visit. I entreated Miss Ellen to relinquish the idea of racing till her father could sanction the proceeding.

“ My dear Miss Ellen, be guided by your friends’ advice, and do not gain your experience by a broken limb.”

“ Well now I declare you are as bad as the rest, Mrs. Thelwal, with your lecture ; as if I was going to leap a seven-barred gate, instead of a little gallop : off I go, so now for it, Major Sandford !”

Away went Rattler with his rider, as Miss Ellen shook the reins and cheered her pony onwards ; and away went the major on Bob, unable to resist the challenge and spirit of his fair companion.

Ellen Clifden sat firmly on her pony, and appeared perfectly equal to the undertaking. On they sped with increasing rapidity, while Major Sandford, in most gallant style, allowed the lady to preserve her lead, keeping closely behind Rattler, and curbing Bob into most unwilling compliance with his polite intentions. Rattler, however, either alarmed at the sound of his neighbour's feet, or delighted with the excitement of keeping foremost in the race, began to kick violently, and at last succeeded in getting the bit between his teeth, he put his head between his fore-feet, and addressed himself to one of those kicking bouts which Mr. Clifden had foretold would end in dislocation, and which Ellen Clifden had denominated "capital fun." In this instance, it wore no appearance of "fun," for the pony continued to plunge and kick with increased determination, and Bob, influenced by the force of example, began rearing with equal alacrity. Sir James sent his groom gently forward, and Lord Elford proceeded to the spot, where Ellen Clifden still held on her seat, and was laughing at the major's attempts to dismount from his own unruly steed. Her spirit was undamaged.

"Do not come near me, Lord Elford!" she exclaimed, as his lordship approached her. "Let me alone—I shall soon quiet or tire out Rattler;" and Ellen Clifden applied the whip severely to her

recreant pony. Rattler answered the application, by wheeling suddenly round with a quickness which unseated his rider, and Ellen Clifden fell to the ground, while her habit-skirt became entangled in the horns of the saddle. In this state she was dragged by Rattler, who having succeeded in his intention of proving his mettle trotted towards us, and was caught by the groom without difficulty. We gathered round the unfortunate girl, who was stunned by the fall, and severely bruised and scratched in the process of dragging.

Lady Langham ordered the groom to ride home and send the carriage as quickly as possible, and Major Sandford, in great agitation, galloped off to bring Mr. Linton instantly to the spot where poor Ellen lay in torn and crushed habiliments, covered with dirt and streaming with blood. It seemed an age ere the major reappeared with his companion, but our fears were at once allayed by the presence and report of Mr. Linton, who considered his patient bruised and stunned, but free from vital injury. No bones were broken, and the hat had preserved her head from serious accident; bruises and contusions were plentiful, but, except the dislocation of the left-hand thumb, nothing had sustained material wrong. Poor Ellen recovered her recollection slowly, but her first words were entreaties to be taken home.

“ I am so bruised—so ill. I want Selina and mamma. Oh, let me go home, dear Lady Langham, and don’t say I was so obstinate. Oh, goodness, my poor bones are in a terrible state—I declare I shall never move again, but don’t punish Rattler. Have I lost or won, Sir James ?”

“ You have done both, Miss Clifden ; you have lost your seat, but you have won our hearts by your merciful remembrance of Rattler, whom I advise you to shoot.”

“ Oh, for ever, no !—don’t say such a thing of my dear pony, Sir James ; but I am so ill and bruised—oh, who will take me home !”

That arrangement was soon completed. Lady Langham decided instantly upon accompanying Ellen Clifden to her home, and Sir James Langham undertook to drive her as gently and smoothly as the road would allow. Major Sandford also insisted upon forming part of the suite. I had never seen him so completely dejected as he appeared when he assisted Sir James in placing Ellen Clifden in the carriage. “ Poor thing !” he muttered feelingly, “ I would rather have broken my own neck than this accident should have happened. How well she sat her horse, and now I dare say she will grow nervous and timid.” He would not quit her. “ Ten to one but she would like to have something to lean against, and he certainly was the

cause of her bruises ;” therefore the major deposited himself at Ellen’s side, and prepared to divide the cares of nursing with Lady Langham, who smilingly acquiesced in the proposal. Sir James Langham cast an eyeglance full of meaning upon me, as he closed the carriage door.

“ But my dear Mrs. Thelwal, what is to become of you ? I must make you over to my lord, and I know you will excuse our abrupt departure, considering the circumstances of the case ; we shall not be absent a couple of hours.”

“ Do not think of me,” I answered, as the colour rushed into my face at the awkward situation in which I was placed. “ Think only of your poor invalid ; your groom will drive me home.”

The carriage moved on at a foot pace, and I was left upon Hippesley Down with Lord Elford, the curricie, a groom, and four riding horses.

Lord Elford silently handed me into the curricie, and committed the horses to the care of his own servant, who had orders to walk them home. I expected Sir James’s groom, who had returned with the carriage, would resume his master’s place, but my astonishment was indescribable when I beheld Lord Elford at my side.

“ I cannot allow a lady to be driven by a servant when I am able to offer my services,” was his calm remark as he gathered up the reins. And behold

me again in an open carriage driven by Lord Elford, whom I had treated with so much duplicity, and with whom I had once parted for ever !

Our drive was in silence : I had not courage to proffer a word, nor could I give utterance to them, had they risen to my lips. I sat in the stillness of amazement, revolving the occurrences of the morning, and wondering at the events which had conspired to produce the extraordinary *tête-à-tête* of the moment. Had our drive lasted twelve hours, in lieu of so many minutes, I should never have broken the distressing agitating silence. I was seated by the side of him I had lost for ever ; of him whose worth was discovered too late ; of him whom I was resolving to fly ere my heart received an everlasting wound, which must be hopeless as it would be helpless. My heart was too oppressed for words.

We had reached the lodge of the Hermitage : Lord Elford paused at its entrance and spoke to me.

“ Perhaps you would like to extend your drive, Mrs. Thelwal, after the nervous exhibition of this last hour : if you think it would be serviceable, pray order me to drive on. I am at your—quite at your service.”

I made an effort to speak : my words seemed to myself thick and unintelligible, but I meant to

say, "If it will not inconvenience you, I should be glad." Lord Elford understood my meaning, or my looks interpreted its purport, for the horses' heads were turned, and we were on the Hartley road in an instant.

Lord Elford, then, broke the spell which had bound each in silence and reserve, and the accident afforded a subject upon which we could fearlessly converse: it did not lead to any recollection of the past, or give rise to painful emotion. We could both express our alarm and sorrow for the termination of the race, and both agreed in hoping all would end in rather a severe experience on the part of Miss Ellen Clifden. Our drive had one pleasing result; we could now converse without the painfully distressing consciousness which had characterized the meeting of the last two days. We might in future join in conversation, without experiencing that nervous sensation which must arise between persons who meet unexpectedly after such a rapidly dissolved engagement as ours had been, and while the recollection was yet fresh of what we had been to each other. We should be upon ascertained terms of common acquaintanceship, and even that chilling position was far better than the wretched alarms of constant avoidance. Our drive was not a long one, nor was it distinguished by a single observation of peculiar interest, but yet

we *had* been alone,—we *had* kept up something like a dialogue, however dull might be its matter—and when we drew up to the hall-door, I *could* say, without stammering or distress, “ I thank you, my lord, for your kind attention and escort ;” Lord Elford could only reply, “ I am very much honoured in being made useful ;” and both separated, I believed, in a more relieved and comfortable frame of mind.

The Langhams returned before the dressing-bell rang, but Major Sandford was missing. Sir James amused us with the scene which took place at the Clifdens. Miss Ellen had been received with tenderness by her family, and without alarm, as Mr. Linton had wisely prepared them for her appearance by riding forward with tidings of her approach and accident ; but Major Sandford’s regret and self-reproach was unbounded. Mr. Clifden politely endeavoured to relieve his mind from the burthen which oppressed it, but the major could not be prevailed upon to forego his pleasing sorrow ; Mr. Clifden had consequently asked him to stay dinner, which was accepted with eagerness, so Major Sandford was to bring the latest accounts of Ellen Clifden. Sir James affirmed the major’s heart was irretrievably lost to the invalid, for he had never ceased admiring the spirited way in which she had chastised the pony in the midst of his kicking.

“Upon my soul, Langham, such a fine girl as that being kicked to death, would have made me exceedingly low, and it was all my fault too.”

We were reduced to four in number, yet our evening passed more agreeably to me than when many persons were congregated. Lady Langham and myself worked, and the gentlemen amused us with alternate readings and conversation. I felt the withdrawal of the major and Ellen Clifden to be a perfect relief: the giggle was gone, and the prosy tone of the major was silent: neither had annoyed me at the time, but the tranquil feelings I enjoyed now proceeded from effects, and its causes were indubitably the overpowering spirits of the major and the fair Ellen. I underwent a little struggle in trying to suppress a feeling of regret when Major Sandford returned very late from the Clifdens, but his presence would never more prove an affliction to myself; Mr. Clifden had taken a fancy to him, from his appearance of sincere sympathy in his daughter's accident, and he was invited to visit Durnford whenever he felt inclined to extend his ride on that side the country. Major Sandford inclined exceedingly to ask after Miss Ellen's health, and we saw little of his society for some days; for he adroitly managed to set off early after breakfast with some little message or excuse to appear before his fair lady; and even that must increase, or be-

come suddenly extinguished. One evening decided the fate of Major Sandford. He had returned very late from Durnford, and after some cross-examinings on the part of Sir James Langham, he acknowledged "Mr. Clifden had invited him to stay there for a few weeks ; and considering the politeness of the family, and the poor girl's dismal life with her thumb bound up, he thought he ought not to decline the invitation. He should not wish us farewell, because our intercourse would be of daily occurrence, but he should have his things removed to Durnford the following day, and he had promised poor Ellen to break Rattler of that nasty trick of kicking."

"And when is it to be?" asked Sir James Langham. Major Sandford looked foolish and pleased.

"You are always fancying things, Langham, and upon my honour I am meaning nothing that I know of. Ellen Clifden is an uncommonly nice girl, and sits a horse in capital style, but I am not in a hurry to marry."

"That wont do, Sandford : you are on the high road to matrimony, and Benedict is written in every line of you face. You can't get off if you visit there, and when Ellen's thumb is sound, bring her here to receive our congratulations."

"Upon my soul," replied the major, looking particularly sheepish, "I don't know what to say about it : a man must marry some time or other. I'm in

no sort of hurry, but I think Ellen a clever girl and an excellent horsewoman, and if I ever do marry, I may look her way : I don't think the old boy would object to me,"

"Not a bit of it ; the invitation is intended to shew you how highly they estimate your pitying powers ; but what will you say to Miss Bates ?"

"Ha ! ha !" laughed the major, evidently gratified by Sir James Langham's remark. "Well, I shall bring Ellen to see you soon : she is always talking of you, Lady Langham, and your kindness, and her first visit is to be paid here, that she may return thanks, and soon. I like the family very much. Mrs. Clifden is very attentive and kind, and they stand upon no ceremony with me, which I like : I took it into my head after dinner to go and fetch poor Ellen down to dessert, and the family only smiled at my whim : I brought her down and peeled an orange for her, while she sat laughing good-humouredly at the freak, for she had not been down stairs before. Ellen is certainly a very good-tempered girl ; don't you think so, Mrs. Thelwal ?"

We were all of course extremely prepossessed in Miss Ellen's favour, and the major never ceased talking till we retired for the night. In the morning we were again doomed to listen to his very happy expressions of commendation upon every individual at Durnford, and I confess I was most

sincere in thought when I wished him a happy and long visit with his new friends. Major Sandford departed as soon as courtesy would admit of his bidding farewell, and as he cantered among the trees I judged of his feelings by the flourish of his whip, and the rapid pace at which Bob was urged along.

Each day, since my extraordinary drive with Lord Elford, had diminished the reserve of his lordship's manner towards me, and in some degree lessened my own timid feelings. The two or three last days had been agreeably passed. We had not again driven out, or even walked alone, but he had gradually become a part of the scene, and wherever I was stationed I became used to his presence, and grew fearless at his approach. This was not a safe situation : I fancied, however, all danger was past, and I no longer contemplated a removal from the Hermitage. The delicious tranquillity of my soul proceeded doubtless from a heart at rest, pleased with surrounding objects, and relieved from the awful weight of Lord Elford's displeasure ; I hailed returning peace, and was happy.

Sir James Langham visited his farm and stables every morning punctually, and we seldom saw him before luncheon, when the weather permitted him to lounge out of doors : Lady Langham usually accompanied her husband on his tour, but since

Lord Elford's arrival she had surrendered her rights into his lordship's hands, and we worked or read together in the boudoir so sacred to Mary, whose taste had furnished and consecrated the spot exclusively for her friend Anne. There we enjoyed quiet hours of conversation, and there I had devoted myself to a course of reading, which amply rewarded me by the train of newly awakened ideas which it gradually produced in my mind. But Lord Elford for some days had allowed Sir James to walk alone, and he had insinuated himself into the boudoir with an offer to read aloud for our amusement. We readily and fearlessly admitted his lordship to an undisputed right of admittance : his society was always sought with pleasure by Lady Langham, and I mentally acknowledged how much more agreeably the morning glided by when Lord Elford formed a third party in its amusements. Sir James was not at all inconvenienced by the desertion of his friend, since he was assured I was present during the readings.

“ My wife has not changed her manners towards me, Mrs. Thelwal, therefore I am not jealous, but you will do me a kindness to give a little hint when you think my lord becomes pointed in his attention, as I do not mean to authorize a gallant to become established in her sanctorum. I had better sit there myself.”

“ I will give you the earliest information,” I answered, colouring, and without looking up. I could not at that moment meet the laughing eyes of my host.

“ Very well, watch each other ; you have drawn Elford from me by some incantation, and now he will be off like Sandford. I wish old Phillips had remained there for my sake, but I think he worshipped at *your* shrine, Mrs. Thelwal.”

I could chat playfully about Dr. Phillips, and boast the possession of his heart : we were in full discourse, attacking and defending, when Lord Elford joined us.

“ Elford, you are welcome ; Mrs. Thelwal is in an argumentative mood, and I hope you are come to take me away from her stinging remarks.”

“ If you are stung, Langham,” replied Lord Elford, smiling, “ you bear pain admirably.”

“ What can a man do, when a fair lady attacks him ? One must smile and suffer.”

“ I am come to offer you a means of escape ; Lady Langham deposes me to shew cause why a riding party should not be acceptable.”

“ To be sure : let us call at Durnford, and see how Sandford is succeeding in his suit : depend upon it, we shall catch him in a lover-like attitude with Ellen Clifden ; but, Mrs. Thelwal, you are too timid to accompany us ?”

I would not admit of breaking up the party on my account. I was a timid horsewoman, and rarely mounted if I could join a driving party—yet I had ridden. I rode several times with Charles Morton ; and if I was sure I might command a horse that neither shied nor stumbled, that would not run away, or put back his ears, I consented to make one of the riding party that day, since there was no fear of racing, or cause for alarm. Lord Elford offered his own horse.

“ Mrs. Thelwal, my horse transgresses in none of the four denounced evil qualities : if you will ride him, you may do so in perfect safety, and I shall be honoured in your accepting his services.”

I was confused and greatly gratified by the polite offer, but surprise did not allow me for the moment to reply as I could have wished. I courtesied only, as Miss Harriet Byron might have done, in the days of Richardson.

“ Let the obligation be mutual,” continued my lord, aware of my feelings, “ and allow me to ride one of your carriage-horses, which are noble-looking animals ; you will not then fancy you are causing inconvenience.”

“ If your lordship will not—” I could not proceed—my heart and throat felt swelled.

“ Then Langham,” resumed Lord Elford, “ I

may report to Lady Langham your concurrence in her plans."

"No, you may not, my lord; I think it incumbent upon me to be jealous, and I mean to tell my wife I choose to be the most agreeable person in her eyes, be the others who they may. Mrs. Thelwal, do you think I have arrived at the true Bluebeard expression? Look at me well before I burst into the boudoir."

"You are looking more like a bully than a true hero, with that face of bluster, and my scissors in your hand. You cannot insist upon being considered the most agreeable man in the world, when you resemble the frog swelling to imitate the size of the ox."

"There now, is this attitude more correct?"

"Yes, now you look dignified and alarming."

Sir James endeavoured to preserve his mock solemnity of manner, but his features could not retain their unnatural position; before he reached the door, the sparkling eye and agreeable smile resumed their wonted brightness, and Sir James Langham was himself again.

"Do not hope to alarm," I exclaimed, laughingly; "you must relinquish the idea of enacting Bluebeard, and be only the most agreeable husband in the world, by speaking in your own character."

“ And then I may return innocently to my station at Lady Langham’s side,” rejoined Lord Elford.

Sir James went smiling forth, and I was left with Lord Elford.

I busied myself in the task Lady Langham had deputed me to undertake that morning; I was sorting and adapting different shades of lamb’s-wool for her ottoman, and for some moments I did not, and could not, address a word to his lordship. At last the silence became painful, and I exclaimed, almost unconsciously,

“ How very tiresome it is, puzzling about these colours !”

Lord Elford approached the table, and seated himself near me.

“ Can I assist you in selecting the shades ? Will you trust my judgment in distinguishing colours ?”

“ You shall try your powers,” I replied, still bending my head over the lamb’s-wool skeins; “ there are a lot of greens and purples, range them according to their gradations ;” and I placed a pile of skeins before his lordship.

We were again silent, and employed in our respective occupations.

“ This is not a green or a purple,” remarked Lord Elford, holding a skein towards me as he spoke.

“ Oh, yes it is, very pale green, almost amounting to a tinge of yellow. Let me see if you have another like it.”

We examined the skeins together from the same pile, and our hands came in contact by accident; the movement disordered us both, and our conversation became incoherent.

“ These are blue, Mrs. Thelwal.”

“ Yes; they are pink, I perceive, my lord.”

“ You will put it on when you ride to-day, perhaps.”

“ I shall go there certainly, my lord.”

My ideas became perfectly indistinct, and I could not convey a sentence intelligibly. Lord Elford appeared equally agitated, but we persevered in trying to sustain a dialogue: it seemed to be necessary to conceal our emotion.

“ Major Sandford dines out to-day, I believe.” Lord Elford spoke almost inaudibly.

“ Yes; we shall expect him, I suppose, at dinner.”

“ Do you think he will marry Mrs. Clifden?”

This question in some degree restored me to recollection, and I could not help smiling at its boldness; it proved so clearly Lord Elford's perfect absence of mind. Lord Elford saw the smile, and he caught my hand.

“ We are talking sad nonsense, Louisa.”

“ We are, indeed, Edmund.”

I started at the familiar word which had passed my lips after so long a period of silence, and I rose hastily from my seat to escape from the room. Lord Elford rose also, but my hand was firmly grasped, and I could not fly. I trembled excessively. Lord Elford suddenly released my hand, and he stood before me with extended arms.

I rushed into his embrace.

THE END.



